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No. 88
Dec 2001

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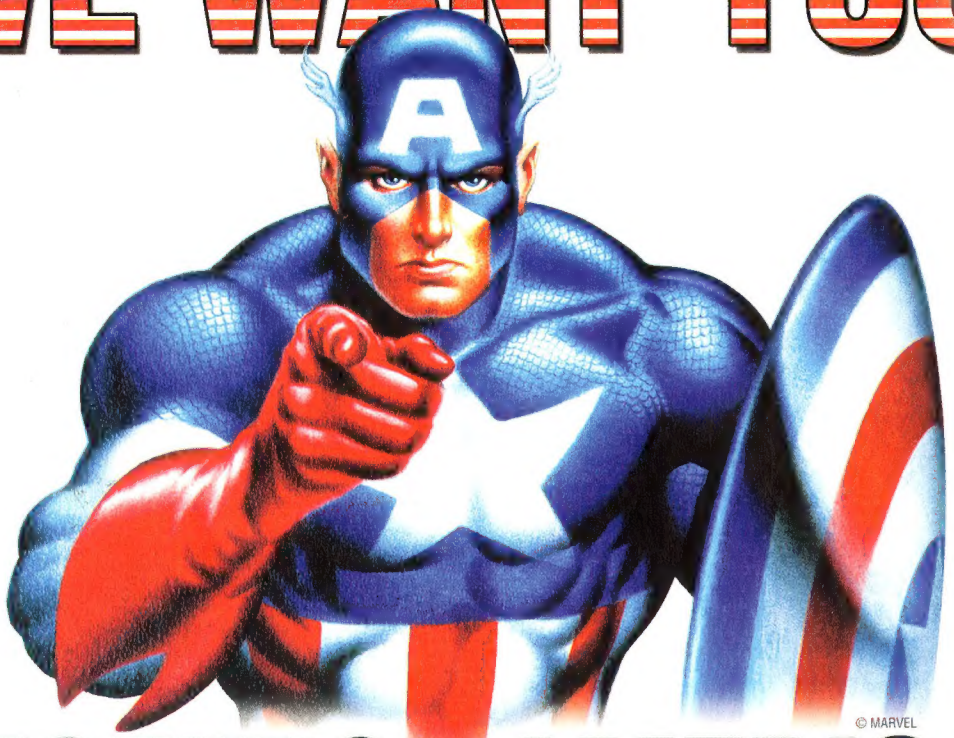

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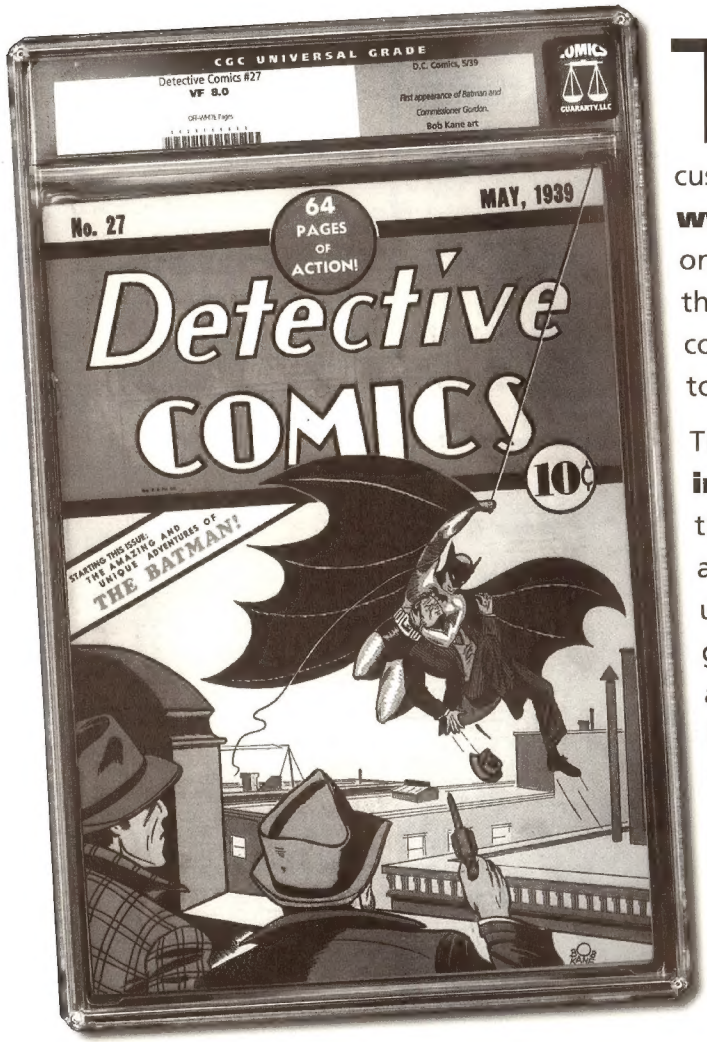

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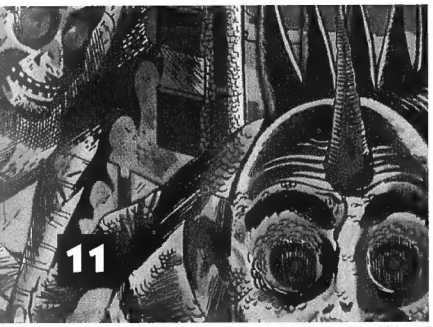

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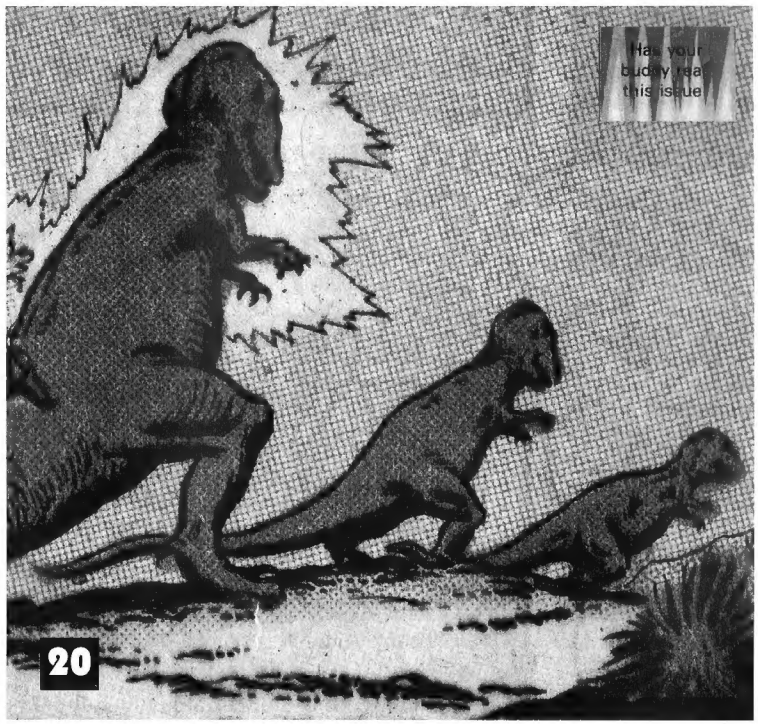
Dan DeCarlo

Dan DeCarlo, long-time *Archie* artist and *Josie & the Pussycats* creator, died December 19, 2001, of an apparent heart attack. He was 82 years old. Earlier this year, DeCarlo was hospitalized with triple pneumonia, but recovered, and was working on comic projects with DC and other publishers. Born December 12th, 1919, DeCarlo followed in the footsteps of many of the cartoonists of his generation, art school after high school, and then military service during World War II. In 1946, DeCarlo landed a job at Timely (Marvel) Comics, where he drew *Millie the Model*, *My Friend Irma* and countless covers. After freelancing among other comic companies, DeCarlo accepted a position at Archie Comics in 1957, where he created Josie & the Pussycats, the lead character of which was named after DeCarlo's wife. Additionally, DeCarlo created Sabrina, the Teenage Witch and Cheryl Blossom while at Archie. During his long career at Archie, DeCarlo drew virtually every Archie character, seeing much of his personal artistic style adopted as the Archie "house style." Despite the legal difficulties he had with Archie Comics, Decarlo was still sought after as a creator, landing penciling jobs at DC, Bongo, Claypool and other publishers up until his death.



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Should comics be "cartoony" or "representational"?

Imagine my surprise to pick up the October 2001 issue of *The Comics Journal*, and read the guest editorial by Tom Devlin. It was titled "A Legacy of Mediocrity," and subtitled "How the Worship of EC Comics Has Stunted the Growth of Comics for More Than 40 Years."

Heresy! In black and white, right there for the whole world to read! I wondered, is Devlin really serious about this, or is he just rousing rabble? Sometimes, I thought, those bad boys at *TCJ* like to take a contrary position just to instigate a heated discussion. Here are some quotes from Devlin's editorial:

I do, in fact, think these cartoonists (Herriman, Segar, Schulz, et al) and the comics they make are superior to the kind of "cartooning" typically found in your average EC comic...Don't get me wrong, many of those comics are filled with fine illustrations; they just make lousy comics. They're too cinematic, too labored looking, too concerned with "capturing the light"...It's a bunch of bad, stiff actors standing around awkwardly spouting dopey dialogue while a painstakingly rendered multi-tentacled alien emerges from a sparkling spaceship...Oh yeah, I hate Prince Valiant."

So I wondered, "How would Al Feldstein react to this opinion?" I sent Al a copy of the editorial and asked for his comments. He wrote back:

I read Tom's Editorial carefully, and as I did so, I began to wonder what he was so angry about. Okay...so he prefers today's "cartoon-y" comics over 1950's "illustrative dramatic" comics. That's his choice and he's welcome to it. But he's out of his mind to compare the two. That's like the proverbial "comparing apples to oranges!" That's like comparing "Looney Tunes" movies to "Gone With the Wind" movies! The EC Comics of the '50s were created in an era before the onslaught and explosion of television, when comic books and movies were the only forms of "visual" entertainment available. They were not introduced to replace the cartoon-y comics of the period, but rather to offer to the comic book reading public a more adult and improved entertaining product, both in story content and art presentation, than was being produced in comic books at that time. And to blame the "Worship" (translation: "appreciation") of what EC did back then for stunting the growth of comics today is equally ludicrous. That's like saying that the love and admiration of classic cars is stunting the technological growth of today's automobile industry. The fault, dear Thomas, lies not in what EC did back then, but in what the talents of the industry are ***not*** *doing today! Unlike the automobile industry that moved on from its "classic" cars to today's innovative designs containing technological wonders, the comic book industry has failed to offer anything really new and inventive since it castrated itself with the Comics Code. Mr. Devlin can continue to "worship" his cartoon-y comics...but he is way out of line condemning the appreciation of what EC did back in the '50s with the state of the Comic Book Industry today.*

You know, in terms of numbers, I can find a part of me that tends to agree with Devlin. Today's comics could use more artists like Herriman and Segar, and perhaps fewer Wally Wood clones and Jack Kirby imitators. I'd love to see more well-done cartoon-y comics and less slam-bang super-hero action. Surely there is room enough in the world of comics for both.

We asked *TCJ* publisher Gary Groth for permission to reprint Devlin's editorial with Feldstein's response. He wrote: "Reprinting it would be Tom Devlin's decision, not mine, and if I were him, I wouldn't let you reprint it because I

[continued on page 80]

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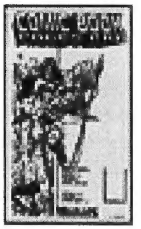

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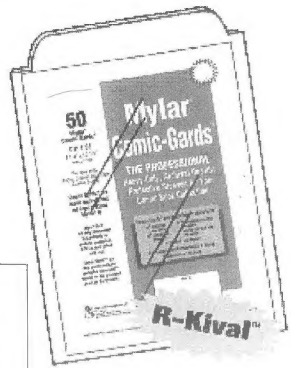

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16-20	13.25	15.75	16.75	20.50	28.00	53.75
21-25	15.75	17.50	20.50	22.25	31.50	72.00
26-30	17.50	19.75	22.75	26.00	32.00	82.50
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Have a Grade Day

I just saw the news in the *Comics Buyer's Guide* e-mailer that the "pay copy" of *Marvel Comics #* 1 sold for $350,000. Also included in the article was this quote: "Despite the writing, CGC graded the copy as a Very Fine/Near Mint 9.0. Primary Grader Steve Borock said that, while he took off 'a little' for the writing, the company doesn't downgrade for date stamps or arrival dates 'and someone did this at Timely for a reason.' "

I have not seen this book (and no one else ever will now that it's slabbed), but the above quote sounds like Mr. Borock is trying to rationalize giving this book a higher grade than it deserves. Isn't it a bit hypocritical for CGC to only take off "a little" for the (from what I've read extensive) writing in the book, when most "normal" slabbed books with writing I've seen get more than "a little" taken off, and CGC gives autographed books that come in a Qualified grade? (a grade which, a company claiming to be "THE" grading standard, shouldn't even need).

Does this sound like something an unbiased grading service does? It seems that this book was given some leeway not afforded other books, just because of its historical significance and potential for positive publicity for CGC. I believe every comic should be graded with the same standards, whether it's 6 months old or 60 years old (something CGC obviously doesn't agree with, or they never would have had the separate Modern grade in the first place). The fact that it appears this book got a better grade than it should have because someone at Timely did this writing "for a reason" is a weak justification.

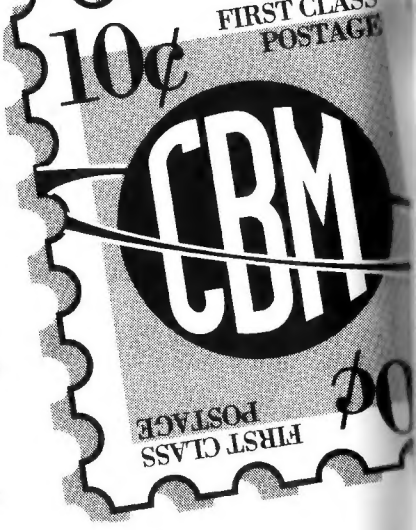
I looked through the 2001 *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*'s grading definitions, and the first mention I see of date stamps is in Very Good, where they say "Store stamps, name stamps, etc., have no effect on this grade." So can you assume they affect the higher grades? (*Overstreet* makes no mention of date stamps in the higher grades). So does CGC's grading agree or disagree with *Overstreet*'s? We don't know, as CGC has never made their grading standards public. In fact, I think the statement that they don't downgrade for store stamps (in any grade?) is the first concrete grading information I've heard from them. Isn't it about time they released their grading standards? I find it hard to believe they can routinely distinguish between a FN, FN-, VG/FN, VG+, and VG. (Their grading system from their website). Many dealers I know use either the plus/minus or the split grading system, not both.

And just to put this all into perspective, here's a direct quote from CGC's website: "Due to the fragile nature of comic books, CGC does not offer a grading guarantee." The only guarantees CGC offers is that one pre-grader and two senior graders will review every comic book submitted, and that its holder will be free of defects. So I guess I shouldn't worry too much about getting a guaranteed grade anyway.

If I buy a CGC book, I'll just continue to do what most buyers on eBay do: assume the comic is one grade lower than CGC graded it, and then be pleasantly surprised if it isn't.

Stu Cathell, Kenmore, WA

Real George



I drove all over the Tampa area looking for the Perez cover edition [of *CBM #*86], but to no avail. So I've decided to order it directly from you. New issue is great as always. I see a theme trend (I don't know if it's because of the new editor), a lot more modern stuff. The magazine is always fun to read; I hope you don't go too far from your roots (Golden Age). Good to see a nice write-up on Randy Reynolds' great book, not just because he's a friend of mine.

I've also enclosed a copy of my magazine, *The George Perez Newsletter* #1; #2 has been printed and should be out soon. Plenty of artwork, articles, trivia, interviews and much more. If any of your readers want to check it out they can contact me at the address below.

Tony Lorenz
8906 Railford Ct., Tampa, FL 33615

I am a big fan of George Perez, so I bought *CBM* #86 for his interview. When I had read that the interview was only Part I, I assumed that issue 87 would feature the continued interview, only to discover that there wasn't any. So I'm left wondering what will happen to the rest of the interview? Thank you in advance.

Sleeper101@hotmail.com, via e-mail

[We have had so many prior commitments for other articles that we haven't had space to run the rest of the Perez interview yet. But we do plan to do so, so stay tuned.]

Likes Strips

I never write anybody or any magazine, but I'm so happy *CBM* is still with us! And I was very surprised and pleased that you announced coverage of such a diverse and relevant range of collector topics: contrary to what one Internet writer said, I don't believe that strips and coverage on them to be a deterrent to comic-fandom interest.

I have found investing in Sunday strips or dailies to be cheaper and, contrary again to the fan in your recent letter column, the context of the times *Popeye* or *Flash Gordon* or *Terry* or *Li'l Abner* played out really lends itself to investigating "racist and offensive" aspects, not glorifying them.

I feel that the big boobed bad-girl art and some of the violence in the '90s comic books to be far more problematic in terms of sexual politics, how men and women, boys and girls relate to each other in the world today than Capp's satire or Invisible Scarlett O'Neill's un-liberated status for example.

Is it a generational issue? Maybe. What one person thinks is "an important and cool subject" totally has no interest for many others. But is vox populi the goal? Always? I'm not ragging on the fan I keep quoting, I just totally disagree with his opinion. I think the comic book collectibles world is big enough for all of us to get coverage on what we enjoy.

So please...have articles on the strips, such as the forthcoming Hal Foster book; [I]can't wait!

There is just so much out there with strips that I think people can find their eyes opened to sequential story telling from another age, and really be entertained.

Your magazine provides such a pleasant and diverse group of stories, and, most importantly, remembrances, like goddess Michelle Nolan's articles, or the Snyder picture with his Big Little Books...remembrances are always relevant. I would read your magazine if you never had any information regarding Sunday strips or artists etc.

Jay in Denver, via e-mail

Pro for Con

I'd like to say that yours is still the greatest mag out there for the serious golden and silver age collector. The input from the readers, fabulous articles, interviews, the great shots in the color gallery, market report, and much more..

My stepson and I visited the Big Apple Con and as usual we had a great time. Seeing the abundance of golden and silver age comics, celebrities, toys, and art. But for the city that doesn't sleep I didn't see any advertisement in one of the major newspapers or not even a blurb in your mag.Come on guys, where's the beef in promoting the great shows for New York City? Thanks for listening.

Michael Kontos, via e-mail

Thank you, Michael, for your perspicacity. Promoting comic conventions is an art in itself, and the people who do it for the San Diego Con are the best in the world at it. All show organizers should study what they do and do likewise. We are happy to post announcements about upcoming conventions in CBM, and we do sell paid advertising!

Russ Cochran

Steps to Perfection

I just read *CBM* 86 during my morning session on the stairmaster and wanted to send you a few thoughts. I'm always cranky after a workout, so if my comments are too blunt, I apologize. At least they're from the heart.

About some of the directions you're considering:

Strips: I collect strips and strip art as you know, and I would welcome some coverage of these topics. However, I'd only welcome this if the articles have something new to say. I don't want to see introductory rehashes of the major strips—"Hal Foster is one of the most important artists in the history of comics and influenced countless creators, even comic book artists!" Yuck. Also don't make the mistakes of *Nemo*. Two of the major reasons that magazine sucked were the reprints in b&w of full page Sundays (usually unreadable, and always ugly), and pretentious, pompous articles by knowledgeable authorities who are very poor writers (e.g. Bill Blackbeard).

Personal reminiscences: Please don't share with us stories of your cross-country rides with Bruce Hamilton, and please don't print other fans' reminiscences. I hate this stuff.

Comic-related collectibles: I have no interest in toys, lunch boxes, etc and would prefer not to see it in *CBM*.

Columns: Feel free to get rid of the columns by Pat Calhoun and Michelle Nolan.

Articles: One of the worst things about the old *CBM* was the long article on a character or comic that was largely just plot recaps. Hopefully you can do better.

So far I've just been negative. What do I want to see? I'd like more coverage of original art, as you seem inclined to do. Most important, I'd like to see a focus on the "Marketplace" part of the magazine's title, particularly on original art, pricing trends in Golden and Silver Age comics and so on. This aspect of the magazine seems to get very little attention typically—a few market reports and that's it.

Roger Clark, via e-mail

I appreciate you writing us, Roger, even though I disagree with your opinions of Michelle's and Pat's columns. I agree that color Sunday strips look bad when reproduced in black and white (see some nice old Gasoline Alley *Sundays in color in* CBM *#87) and I, too, do not enjoy articles which are basically recaps of plot outlines. We also did a report in #87 about the Mastronet auction, which is a market report, including original art sales. I hope you are enjoying R.C. Harvey's articles on comic strips, too. We are trying our best to head off in a new direction without losing any* CBM *old-timers. Please stay tuned for a few more issues as we get up and rolling. And next time you write, do so after you have done something pleasant!*

RC

Buff that Bronze

Well, it is official—Zorro's secret identity has been revealed and it's John Stuart. All right, it's actually just me wearing my official Zorro shirt and hat, circa July 1958, Toronto. I couldn't find any early photos of me reading comics but I thought you might get a kick out of this early photo of me as Zorro.

It was great to finally see my 1997 article "The Birth of the Bronze Age" in *CBM* # 86. I enjoyed the addition of the other

two articles which also posed the question "What book marked the begining of the Bronze Age?" by Dave Blanchard and by Ed Rock.

Perhaps it would be a good idea for *Comic Book Marketplace* to utilize its position in the industry and poll the readers of *CBM* to answer the above question.

After all, who's better positioned to determine what book defines the beginning of the Bronze Age. So why not ask the readers in a future issue to choose between:

1. WEIRD WAR TALES # 1, 1971
2. GIANT SIZE X-MEN # 1, 1975
3. GREEN LANTERN # 76, 1970

It would certainly enhance the reputation of *CBM* to take the initiative and finally establish the first book of the Bronze Age.

John R. Stuart, via e-mail

Thanks, John. We also got a nice response to that article from none other than Paul Levitz at DC Comics. It's gratifying to know that the industry leaders like Paul are keeping tabs on what we write here in CBM.

RC

Re: your recent debate in *CBM* on the end of the Silver/beginning of the Bronze. I'd argue the Silver Age ended when the publishers shifted from the art being done twice up to one and a half times repro size. This had dramatic effects on the artists' styles (you can argue who was 'ruined' in the process and who was transformed, but the list of key talent whose work changes is massive). The economy move created shifts in the talent pool as some artists fell out of favor or had difficulty working in the new size, storytelling style for both artists and writers (as the number of panels per page began to change as an unanticipated side-effect), and generally began a wave of volatility in a fairly static industry. The change hit different shops at slightly different times, but for an example look at the shift in Kirby's work in the 1968 issues of *FF*.

You could also make the argument to date the change from the beginning of direct sales in 1974, given the dramatic effect that had on collectability and the shape of the field. Hope all's well.

Paul Levitz, New York

Thanks, Paul, for your continuing interest in CBM. *We are always happy to hear from you and all the other good folks at DC Comics.*

RC

Re: the most recent issue of *CBM*—another installment in the debate over when the "Bronze" Age started. I see it as a series of phased events—Weisinger's retirement; 15-cent cover prices; Kirby switches to DC; *Conan* #1, etc. One might begin to question the long-term efficacy of naming new and more recent comic book "ages" after precious metals (there's but a finite number). The article underscores the need to clearly define beginnings and endpoints. Historical geologists developed their useful scale of "relative" time (ages) based upon "index" fossils (and extinctions thereof), perhaps at the risk of sounding a bit gruesome, the close of the major comic book ages could be tied to major "extinction" (of characters or titles).

For example, the Atlas "implosion" of 1957 would have been the curtain call for the Atom Age; as would the '78 DC Implosion for the Bronze Age; the events of "Crisis" and "Secret Wars" would cap the period of '78 through the mid '80's. The Marvel cancellations of 1969 (e.g., *Doctor Strange*) might be a marking point for the end of the Silver age; and so on. Just tossed this out for speculation.

A closing request: Any *CBM* readers recall or are familiar with the following story line—it appeared in a Silver Age style science fantasy anthology book (title and publisher unknown, I was but four years old at the time)? Story involves a (presumably) down-on-his luck fisherman who captures a merboy in his nets. The "rest" is supposedly a given—fame, fortune for the fisherman, that is until a group of mermen abduct him and take him to their undersea city (in a submarine, no less!!). I can't recall much else other than the art, which is reminiscent of that for original stories written at that time (it didn't look like a reprint of Golden or Atom age art). Any guesses as to the story, series title & issue, and creators? Drop a quick message to Myls Putman (at the e-mail address below for the time being) or snail-mail to me c/o T'amam, PO Box 794, Stone Ridge, NY 12484-0794.

Myls Putman, Shuassoc@aol.com

Likes Gold, Silver

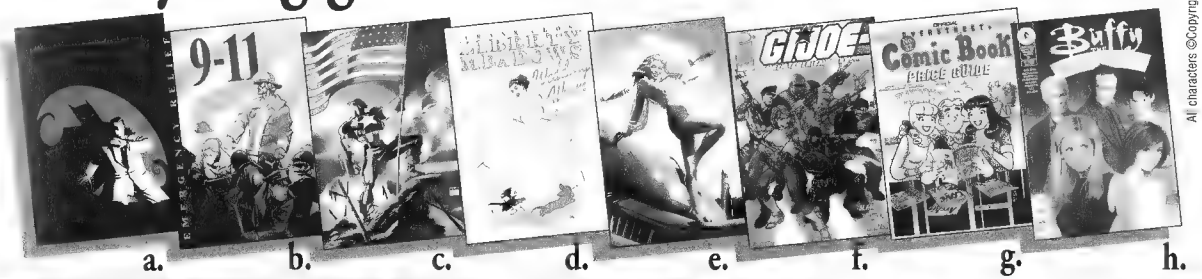
After allowing my *CBM* subscription to lapse a couple issues back (because I was finding fewer and fewer articles of interest), I picked up *CBM* 86 at the store, and I'm afraid it reminded me why I was no longer a subscriber. My only comics interests are the Golden and Silver Age, which *CBM* used to cover pretty well. *CBM* 86 has almost no such content. I'm barely familiar with Perez, and I have zero interest in pulps, strips or statues, and I suspect the number who do nationwide is pretty small. I bought *CBM* 86 mostly because of the cover, which I presumed indicated SA Avengers content—but instead I got Bronze.

I was hoping *CBM* (or *CBA* or *AE*) would get around someday to covering more older comics creators that haven't really had their due: Andru, Brown, Certa, Costanza, Elias, Ely, Forte, Greene, Heck, Klein, Mooney, Papp, Paris, Plastino, Premiani, Rosenberger, Roth, Sachs, Sparling. Or do issues highlighting the creation and early history of the LS-H, the Teen Titans, Captain Action, Creeper, et al. I've read a few interviews with Ramona Fradon, for example, but I still know next to nothing about how Metamorpho was created—are Haney, Paris, Orlando & Trapani all on record about their contributions?

I know ya gotta go with your strengths, and I know there probably isn't enough in the budget or enough time in the day to do much research on the less recognized comics creators

[continued on page 10]

a. A Dark Knight detective driven by vengeance. b. A story of tragedy overcome by true heroism. c. The embodiment of American ideals. d. A wedding with at least one unknown participant. e. High-flying adventure with a patriotic flair. f. Defenders of freedom and justice. g. An ageless all-American teen. h. A young girl turned savior of the innocent.



a. b. c. d. e. f. g. h.

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[continued from page 8]

and creations. But that's the kind of stuff that would entice me to subscribe again.

Regardless, I wish *CBM* continued success, and thanks for "listening"!

Karl Mattson, via e-mail

Karl, most of the articles in CBM *come in as submissions by fan-writers who are interested in certain areas. I'm sure there are people reading this who are fans of the artists you list, from Andru to Trapani, and we'd like to have them submit articles for our consideration. If we get these submissions, and they are well-written, we will certainly run them.*

RC

Endless 'Chain' Letters

This is in response to Collin Alsche's story-search in "Marketplace Mail" in #86 regarding an ACG tale titled "The Endless Chain." It's the last story in *Adventures Into the Unknown* #94 (March 1958).

The easy-to-spot cover, by Ogden Whitney, features the opening story "The Repair Shop," and shows an 'injured man' wearing a yellow shirt with black polka dots sprawled on the floor next to an identically dressed and sprawled doll.

I've seen a few copies at conventions and in catalogs, so it doesn't seem to be an unobtainable 'key.' Good luck, Collin.

Kevin Naughton, LaMesa

Concerning the letter written by Collin Alsche in the October issue of *CBM*; if he likes the story "The Endless Chain" from that ACG comic book, he needs to be turned on to EC comics where virtually every story matches that ACG tale in quality or exceeds it in every way!

David Dellario, via e-mail

Well, now David, I couldn't have said it better myself! And, should anyone wonder where they can find reprints of those wonderful EC Comics, wonder no more, just go to www.ECCrypt.com!

RC

Classics Terrorized

About the photos—both picture my brother Mark and I on the front steps of our home in Kettering, Ohio, early 1950s, for a long time I had only the first photo of myself looking through a comic book, which I conjectured could have been an early *Classics Illustrated* purchase, my main collecting interest in the '50s. Recently I found the original negatives for this set, still undated, but a second photo clearly showed an old *Tomb of Terror* issue! I immediately looked up the title in the Gerber book and found an illustration for *TOT* #8, published by Harvey in March '53. The first *CI* I bought was #78, "Joan of Arc," with an HRN of 113 (issued in Nov, 53), making that event at least eight months away.

As far as being known—I've been heavily involved with *Classics* fandom for the last 25 years, including a stint as Assistant Editor of *The Classics Collector* from '89 to the present.

Here are a few comments on *Comic Book Marketplace*, my favorite magazine (I have 90% of the run).

The Whitman articles and Jack Adler piece are my favorites thus far. Not having collected Pulps or Statues, those articles do not appeal personally, would rather see comics articles here. I don't see a need to cover 'New and Noteworthy' items unless they are tied to Gold/Silver/Bronze comics, like the Marvel Masterworks article. *Wizard*, *Comic Shop News*, *CBG*, *Previews*, etc. cover the new material fairly well. Am interested in upcoming article(s) on Newspaper Comics '30s-'50s, not Big Little Books.

John Haufe, Jr., Ohio

Hey, Kid, whatcha readin'? **Classics Illustrated?**

Yipes!

UK Komics

Greetings from the UK. My name is Rob Kirby, and for the past ten years plus I have been collating data for an in-depth index to almost every comic ever published by Marvel UK since 1972. I'm currently putting together the final artwork (less than two chapters to complete, and some input still awaited for the history chapter as well), and hope to self-publish next year. I saw your plea in the current *CBM* and thought that I'd drop you a quick note, just to see if this is a topic that might interest you.

As you can imagine there is a ton of artwork produced for Britain that has never, or rarely, been seen in the States. Additionally, there are US-produced stories that we had in

[continued on page 13]

GARGOYLE GALLERY!

by Pat Calhoun

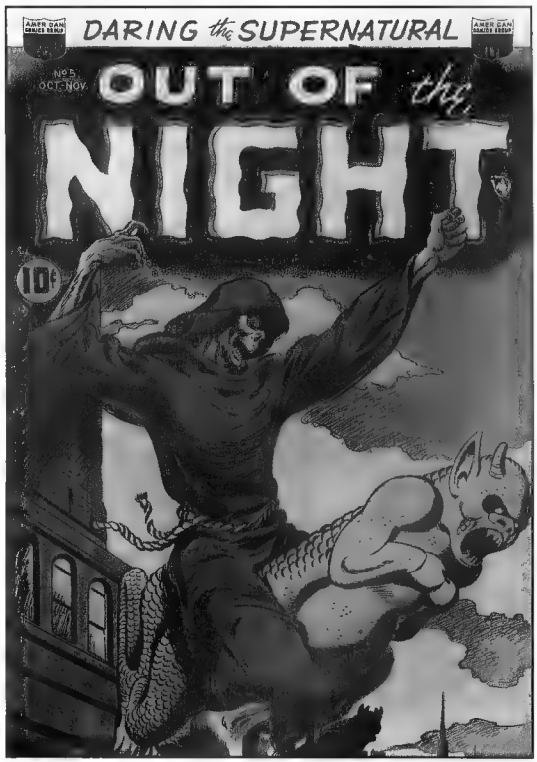
They are horror stories carved in stone, palpable nightmares that for hundreds of years have chilled the blood of those who gaze upon them. In winter storms they serve as rain spouts on the old churches, and it is the gargling sound of the water sluicing through their hollow throats that gave them their name. To celebrate gargoyle appearances on the covers (and inside) the great pre-Code fantasy/horror comics is to celebrate centuries of the tradition of artists using images of monsters to inspire mystical awe and terror. Here, then, are three such books featuring choice covers of these fabulous sculpted creatures that remain ever-capable of carrying our imaginations into the dark and uncharted realms that lie within.

The cover on ACG's *Out Of The Night* #5 (Oct-Nov 1952) shows a red-robed demon riding a gargoyle to a peak of evil ecstasy. It looks to be the work of Ken Bald—who drew the bulk of ACG covers from this period. No gargoyle tales are offered inside, but there's a wealth of other supernatural archetypes—zombies, witches, and vampires. "The Zombie's Revenge" is typical ACG: a rich executive is pursued by his recently-executed twin brother's zombie—who plans to kill him and take over his identity; and will unless the man's son-in-law-to-be can use his knowledge of black magic to thwart the sinister scheme. It's readable if a trifle pedestrian, with workmanlike art by Charles Nicholas.

"Hex of Horror" is a pretty good yarn, as a young woman enlists the aid of a backwoods sorceress in her battle with her brother who's cheating her of her share of the family wealth. But the enchanted weapon she receives is (as usual) a two-edged sword.

"Adventure Into Witchcraft" is one of those fun stories that starts off in the ACG editorial offices, with a writer being told he'd better come up with some good spooky scripts—and fast. He answers an ad (just by thinking about it!) in *Writer's Weekly* from a woman offering lessons in necromancy. But when the witch-teacher arrives he finds just how high the price for her lessons is. Harry Lazarus' dynamic drawing adds to the effect of this engaging effort.

"The Vampire Master" is a standard 'boat captain, his daughter, and first mate versus vampire and his zombie



Out Of The Night #5 (Oct/Nov 1952) The gargoyle's cry is silent and the demon's is triumphant. We hear both loud and clear thanks to the absence of balloons and blurbs on this nicely uncluttered cover.

horde' riff, but George Karl Wilhelms art is so gorgeous and well-paced that the story delivers real satisfaction, wrapping up a solid issue.

The Beyond #24 (Jan 1954) begins with a superb gargoyle cover by Jim McLaughlin. (Artist info is courtesy of Jim Vadeboncoeur who has profiles of outstanding illustrators and books by and about them for sale at bpib.com.) Inside, the first story is drawn by Ace's finest artist, Lou Cameron. "Step Into My Empty Shroud" is a winner about a crook who thinks he has survived the electric chair but finds that he can't get anyone to agree with him.

"These, My Hands of Doom" is also worthwhile, with an ugly sculptor whose monstrous statues fail to find appreciation making a deal with the devil to wreak vengeance upon the critics that scorned his work. Satan gives him the power to turn anything he touches to stone, and he makes those critics into crystallized corpses, but soon life starts to get difficult. Ken Rice adds appealing art, with plenty of weird statuary in the mad artist's studio.

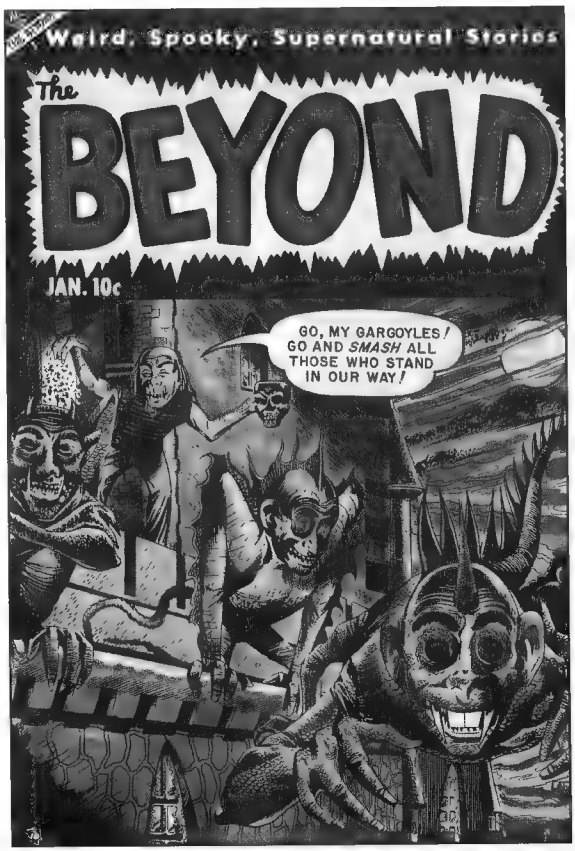
It's more or less downhill after that. "Lair of the Black Widow" is a ludicrous if literal "biter bitten" exercise, and "The Talking Skull" never quite comes alive. Still, it's an A- book from a Grade B comic company.

Marvel Tales #127 (Oct 1954) boasts a nicely conceived and detailed Harry Anderson gargoyle cover. The first story more or less squanders some handsomely ugly Gene Colan art on the painfully obvious results of sibling rivalry in a vampire family. Then "Buried Alive" spins another formula plot—as a stage magician murders his assistant after she threatens to reveal his secrets, but this time Bob McCarty's art captures the ending so well that the yarn succeeds despite itself.

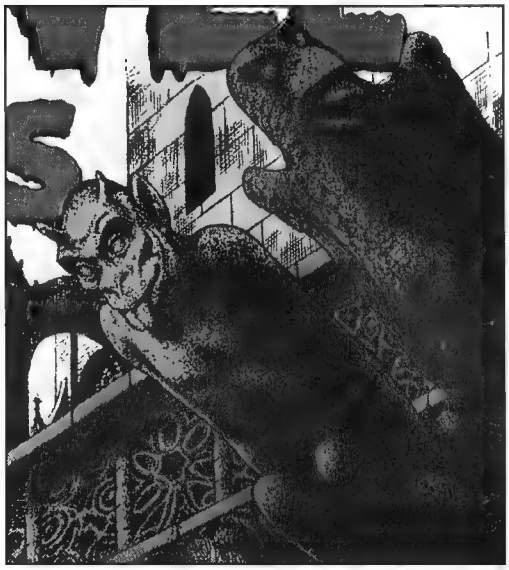
"He Walks Through Walls" is a cursory if mildly amusing account of a man who survives a strong electric shock to find that he can now stroll through solid objects, and of course he heads for the nearest bank vault. "Shrack's Secret" is another 'plot by numbers' affair of an aspiring artist who spies on the master of grotesque modern art to see how he gets so much realism into his portraits of improbable freaks. Needless to say—he finds out the hard way.

The book recoups some with the cover story as a strong finale, but the negligible nature of three of the first four yarns does demonstrate how Atlas fantasy—after several glorious years—was faltering, mostly due to the industry censorship turmoil that had horror in a tailspin and would soon wipe the genre out with the Comics Code. As a tale, "Gone is the Gargoyle" is only slightly better than the four that preceded it, but it's a significant difference, and Mort Drucker's art gives it another boost. Why does the policeman calmly ignore the victim's screams as night after night the gargoyle comes to life to hunt human prey? The grim answer is revealed with graphic sureness, an early highlight of Drucker's brilliant career.

There's not that much difference between guarding the Gothic cathedrals and adorning the covers of early-1950s horror comics. Despite the rhetoric of the witch-hunters, escape literature relieves more anxieties than it causes. And it's good to know that there are such stony sentinels watching over the temple of four-color fantasy.



The Beyond #24 (Jan 1954) The detailed characterizations in the faces of these three gargoyles, full of variety and human touches, combine with superb staging to produce a high-impact cover.



(above) Detail showing remarkable 'grey' stone gargoyles done in stipple, the effect is repeated on the 'missing' gargoyle and is startling in the otherwise four-color cover.

(right) **Marvel Tales** #127 (Oct 1954). This Harry Anderson cover exemplifies his contribution to pre-Code Atlas. His mastery of old-world and antique settings did a lot to up the "literary" ante on many covers and stories.

MARKETPLACE MAIL

[continued from page 10]

a longer format than their eventual US publication (*Planet of the Apes*), and US stories that never even saw print in the standard US comics they were destined for at all (such as the six *Star Wars* stories collected, in cut-up panel form, in those two Marvel Illustrated US paperbacks from the early '80s, and the final two *Star Wars* shorts produced for *Pizzazz Magazine* prior to its cancellation).

I've been lucky enough to have secured help from such luminaries as Dez Skinn, Davids Lloyd and Roach, John Buscema, various UK dealers and several UK editors past and present, all of whom have been invaluable resources. In recent months I've been showing around a preview selection of pages demonstrating most of the book's main sections, and have been very pleased by the warm responses that I've had from dealers over here, who are crying out for a reliable guide to the UK books—and when you see it, you'll understand (as I grew to) why no one has ever been mad enough to attempt this before now!

I know there is a substantial body of UK comics collectors in this country, and I am presuming that this will be duplicated in your neck of the woods, so to speak, based on articles, letters and features I've seen in various American comics magazines and *CBG*, of course. Obviously I'm trying to generate a bit of advance publicity—shock, horror—so if you'd like to cover the subject in some way then please do drop me a line. I'd love to hear from you. All the best—thanks for resurrecting *CBM*. You solved my Gremlins riddle with the final part of the Whitman article. I'd had that issue of *The Comic Reader* all along, but would never have thought to look up Whitman in there. Cheers!

Rob Kirby
2 Bramshott Close, London Road
Hitchin, Herts SG4 9EP England

Crap On!

You may remember me. I have bought most of the EC reprints of yours, including the slipcased sets, over the

[continued on page 78]

Flash Facts and Fancy:

The Adventures of Collecting Flash Gordon

by Michelle Nolan

Considering what an icon Flash Gordon is in the world of space opera, collecting paper material devoted to the ultimate swashbuckler of space can be surprisingly difficult. Most of the best items are either expensive, scarce and/or obscure.

Even so, I'd like to take you on a guide to the best of what the world of Mongo and Ming the Merciless, Flash Gordon and Dale Arden, the Hawkmen and the Clay People has to offer.

After nearly 50 years as a Flash fan, I'm close to being complete, but there are still several pricey paper items I can only hope to find and/or afford some day.

Even though I began to read comic books during a fallow period for Flash Gordon in the mid-1950s, when he was only in the newspapers, I fell in love with the legend of this great character thanks to the three serials revived during the early days of television and the feature versions of the serials shown in theatres during the 1950s.

I can vividly remember coming home from kindergarten and first grade in the 1953-'55 period and being utterly entranced by one of the 40 chapters of the three Flash Gordon serials starring Buster Crabbe and originally shown in 1936 (13 chapters), 1938 (15) and 1940 (12). Even though the serials seem primitive by today's standards, they were captivating wonders of their era and still seemed filled with furious fantasy in pre-Sputnik days.

During 1956, the year I began to buy comics with my own precious dimes and quarters, I could not believe there were no Flash Gordon comic books. I looked for hours in vain for them. I knew there was a newspaper comic strip devoted to Flash's adventures, but I was baffled by Flash's absence from the comic racks.

What I did not discover until a year or two after 1956 was that Flash had already appeared—and disappeared—in comic books. Except for his four pages in *King Comics* #1-155 from 1936-'49, however, Flash Gordon appeared in only 14 newsstand comics over a 13-year period from 1941-1954—ten from Dell and four from Harvey.

Can anyone think of a fictional American icon—one whose name is recognized by virtually every American of any age—who has appeared in fewer comic books? I realize that the King Features Syndicate ownership of the wonderful newspaper strip probably had a lot to do with this, but it nonetheless seems shocking.

I collected comics for nine years before I had the pleasure of seeing a Flash Gordon comic on the stands—the 1965 one-shot Gold Key issue that partially reprinted the 1947 Dell *Four-Color* #173.

That's why I could not believe my eyes when I spotted *Flash Gordon* #1 during the summer of 1966 from the short-lived King Comics line. Al Williamson's spectacular art in that issue was just about as awe-inspiring as anything Alex Raymond did during his groundbreaking 1934-'44 run on the original Sunday strip.

Alas, Williamson drew only three more issues for King (#3, 4, 5). Thankfully, however, the title staggered through 37 issues for three publishers through 1982. More on these later.

The many Flash Gordon-related toys and non-paper goods are beyond the scope of this column. Instead, I'd like to list the best of the American paper items (there are an untold number of foreign publications in a multitude of languages). In addition to the comic books (both newsstand titles and giveaways) and comic strips, original Flash collectibles include the following:

•Fourteen Big Little Books, Better Little Books and Fast Action Books from the 1930s and '40s. These are all pictured in the *Price Guide to Big Little Books* (1995).

•At least 22 paperback novels and comic-strip reprints, all published in the 1970s and 1980s.

•One hardback book, *Flash Gordon and the Caverns of Mongo* (1936).

•One 8- by 9-inch pop-up book, *Flash Gordon and the Tournament of Death* (1935).

•One pulp magazine, the *Flash Gordon Strange Adventure Magazine* (1936).

•At least three coloring books—published by Whitman in 1935 and 1952 and from Saalfield in 1958.

•Three issues of *Look Magazine* with stills from the 1938 serial *Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars* (March 15-29, 1938).

•One Wonder Book (similar to the Little Golden Books), *Flash Gordon and the Baby Animals* (1956).

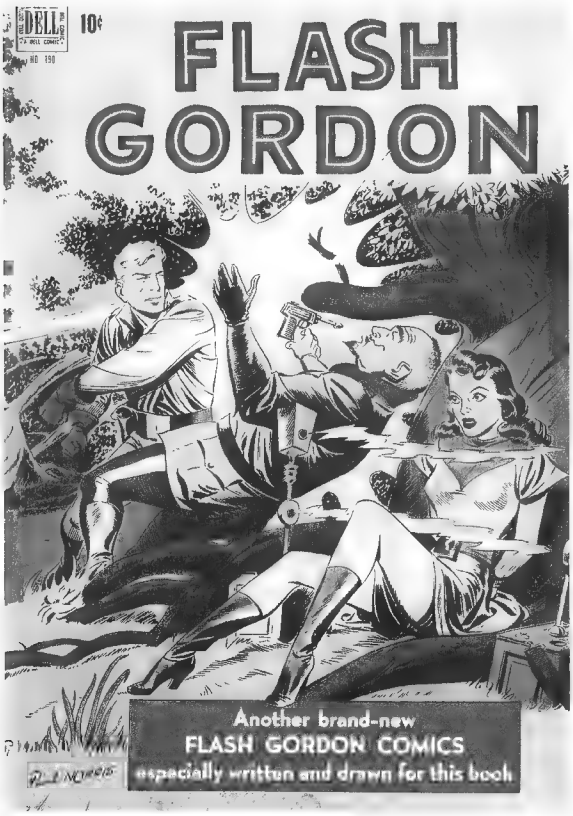
•Twenty books of newspaper strip reprints from Nostalgia Press (seven from 1967-77), Kitchen Sink (nine from 1990-1993) and the Pacific Comics Club (four from 1981).

In addition, I have compiled a list of 16 highly recommended books with extensive material on the three serials along with three books with in-depth essays on the comic strips and comic books (there are dozens of others with at least a passing mention).

Finally, I have included mention of a combination of 20 professionally published magazines and amateur fanzines with the best in-depth articles on Flash Gordon or the actors who played in the serials, on television and in the 1980 film.

That's nearly 100 high-caliber paper items for the serious Flashophile other than the comic books and strips. In addition, wealthy collectors may seek out the rare serial posters and lobby cards. And, of course, there probably is generally undiscovered Flash-related material in 1930s and '40s movie magazines, along with essays in a few books and doubtless a few fanzines and magazines I've never seen.

By the way, if you know of any comprehensive unlisted or unmentioned Flash Gordon items—but not, for example, books or magazines with only one or two stills or a passing mention—I implore you to let me know through *CBM*! My lists are nearly complete, but I'm sure there are Flash Gordon paper items I have never seen. I have, however, tried to pick up a copy of every informative or collectable Flash Gordon item that I've ever run across.



Four Color #190 (1948), the 'most pulpish' Dell cover

FLASH GORDON
A BRIEF LOOK AT THE COMIC BOOKS

Unless you are an absolute completist, the Flash Gordon collector thankfully will not have to collect the issues of *King Comics* #1-114 with Raymond Sunday reprints, since the wonderful Nostalgia Press and Kitchen Sink volumes cover them all. Nor will you need to collect the pricey Dell *Four Color* #10 (1942) and #84 (1945) or the four newsstand Harvey issues (1950-51), which also contain Raymond Sunday reprints. I do recommend trying for any of Flash's own comics, though, but not the *King Comics* issues, which contain only four pages of Flash apiece. Inquire with Bud Plant Comic Art for those Kitchen Sink volumes and Bud Plant Illustrated Books for out-of-print books.

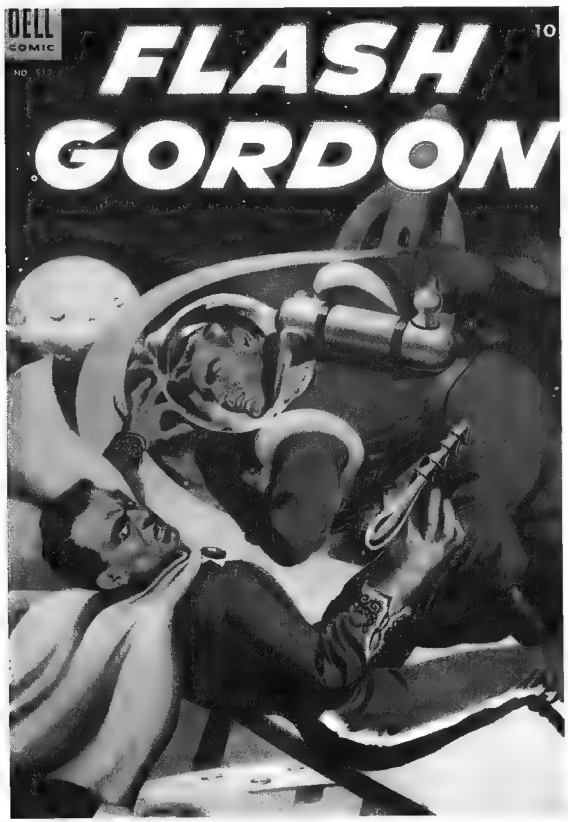
You may, however, wish to collect *King Comics* #115-155 and *Magic Comics* #107-108, since those contain reprints of most of the pretty Sunday pages done by Austin Briggs from 1944-'48 (Raymond left the strip in 1944 when he went into military service and began *Rip Kirby* upon his return in 1946).

It has been years since I've looked at a copy of the first Flash Gordon comic book, the oversized David McKay *Feature Book* #25 from 1941. As I recall, it's a black-and-white book, perhaps with Briggs daily reprints (the first daily strip was published May 27, 1940; Raymond worked only on the Sunday strip). If so, both Kitchen Sink's two Briggs reprint books and the four large folio volumes from

Pacific Comics cover the first 15 months of the Briggs dailies.

What you will want in the way of comics for original (but unspectacular) Flash Gordon stories is a series of affordable issues—Dell *Four Color* #173, 190, 204, 247, 424 and 512 and Dell *Flash Gordon* #2 (5-7/53, coming between *FC* #412 and 512), along with King's *Flash Gordon* #1-11 (1966-'67, which includes some strip reprints), Charlton's #12-18 (1969-70) and Gold Key/Whitman's #19-37 (1978-82).

It's staggering how many fine artists appeared at least briefly in the 37-issue run—Williamson, Briggs, Reed Crandall, Gil Kane, Frank Bolle, Mac Raboy, Jim Aparo, Rich Buckler, Jeff Jones, Mike Kaluta, Pat Boyette, Ric Estrada, Gene Fawcette and Al McWilliams, just to name the artists listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. In addition, Flash Gordon shorts appeared in King's *Phantom* #18-20 (1966), the first by Wally Wood and the last two by Kane.



Fpur Color #512 (1953), the last newsstand **Flash Gordon** for twelve years!

Just as the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* indicates, the original *Flash Gordon* #30 (Oct. 1980) from Whitman is truly scarce, as are so many Whitmans from that period. It took me forever to find it, since I never saw it on the stands. Fortunately, #30 was reprinted with a July 1981 date. In addition, Williamson did an adaptation of the movie for #31-33, which were also combined for a worthwhile book. You'll also want Williamson's two-issue *Flash Gordon* mini-series from Marvel in 1995.

True collectors will seek the half-sized *March of Comics* Flash Gordon giveaways #118, 133 and 142 from 1954-'56, along with the truly scarce 1943 Macy's giveaway (not by Raymond) which pits Flash against Japan. Only the completists, though, will want the nine-issue *Flash Gordon* DC mini-series from 1988-89 and the four-issue *Defenders of the Earth* series from Marvel in 1987.

Don't worry about the one-page "Flash Gordon" fillers in Harvey's *Family Funnies* #2 and 7 and *Tiny Tots* #9 from 1950-51, since those aren't real Flash Gordon items. The ultra-rare *Wow Comics* #4 (Nov. 1936) contains Raymond reprints. Two other items contain Dan Barry daily strip reprints—the oversized *Giant Comic Album* from King Features in 1972 (which I've never seen) and *Street Comix* #2 (1973), an underground-type publication.

Here is the best of everything else with Flash Gordon material:

FLASH GORDON
COMIC STRIP REPRINTS

•Nostalgia Press: 1967 oversized black-and-white edition (later reprinted in regular size), with a wonderful essay by Williamson on Raymond, covering 11/6/38 through 6/29/41. Spectacular line work revealed, followed by 1971 regular sized black-and-white edition with a fine essay by Maurice Horn, covering 4/12/36 through 10/30/38.

•Nostalgia Press: Two 1974 color hardbacks w/uncredited essays on Raymond, covering 1/7/34 through 11/19/35 "In the Planet Mongo" and 11/26/35 through 10/31/37 "Into the Water World of Mongo." Three 1977 color softbacks with essays by editor David Kaler, covering 11/6/37 through 3/5/39 "Escape to Arboria"; 3/12/39 through 4/7/40 "Vs. Frozen Horrors"; and 4/14/40 through 7/6/41 "Joins the Power Men."

•Kitchen Sink: Six 1990-'93 volumes in color: Volume 1, "Mongo, the Planet of Doom," 1/7/34 through 8/11/35; Volume 2, "Three Against Ming," 8/11/35 through 8/1/37; Volume 3, "The Tides of Battle," 8/1/37 through 7/23/39; Volume 4, "The Fall of Ming," 7/23/39 through 7/13/41; Volume 5, "Between Worlds at War," 7/13/41 through

7/4/43; Volume 6, "Triumph in Tropica," 7/4/43 through 7/4/45, with last Raymond page 4/30/44 followed by first Briggs Sunday pages.

•Kitchen Sink: 1988 oversized black-and-white reprints of Dan Barry's daily strips 11/19/51 through 4/20/53 with spectacular essay by Dave Schreiner on the role of Harvey Kurtzman, Frank Frazetta, Jack Davis and others.

•Kitchen Sink: Two 1992-'93 volumes of dailies by Briggs from 5/27/40 through 12/28/40 and 12/30/40 through 8/21/41.

•Pacific Comics Club (Tony Raiola): Four 1981 large folio soft cover reprints of Briggs strips 5/27/40 through 8/23/41.

FLASH GORDON
BOOKS ON THE SERIALS

•*Days of Thrills and Adventure* by Alan Barbour (1970), reprinted with two other Barbour books in *Saturday Afternoon at the Movies* (1986). Truly the classic in its field.

•*The Serials* by Raymond W. Stedman (1971). Totally comprehensive.

•*To Be Continued* by Ken Weiss and Ed Goodgold (1972). Complete casts, chapter titles and plots of every sound serial, with stills from most, along with much other material. A must.

•*Cinema of the Fantastic* by Chris Steinbrunner and Burt Goldblatt (1972). Outstanding essay of 26 pages on Flash Gordon with 27 stills—a must for Flash collectors.

•*The Great Movie Serials* by Jim Harmon and Don Glut (1972). Excellent overview.

•*The Real Flash Gordon* by Katherine Leiner (1980)—a charming children's book on Buster Crabbe.

•*Mythmakers of the American Dream* by Wiley Lee Umphlett (1983). This scarce book is one of the most underrated essays on pop culture.

•*In the Nick of Time* by William C. Cline (1984 with a 1997 reprint). Sheer fun and totally informative, too.

•*Serial Adventures of Flash Gordon, Book One*, by James Van Hise (1988). Covers the first two serials expertly.

•*Serial Adventures of Flash Gordon, Book Two*, by Van Hise (1990). An excellent overview.

•*Those Fabulous Serial Heroines* by Buck Rainey (1990). Perhaps the best essay ever done on Jean Rogers.

•*Cult Movie Stars* by Danny Peary (1991). Perceptive essays on five stars of the serials—Buster Crabbe, Jean Rogers, Charles Middleton, Frank Shannon and Priscilla Lawson.

•*Serial Movie Posters* by Bruce Hershenson (1999 and 2001). Must-have, superbly done.

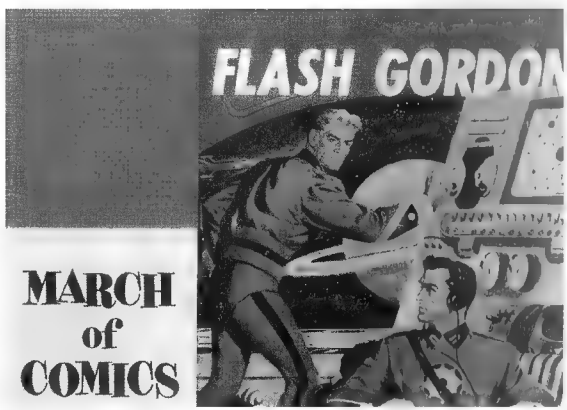
•*Buster Crabbe—A Self Portrait* by Karl Whitezell (2000). Intriguing biography.

FLASH GORDON
BOOKS ON COMIC STRIPS AND COMIC BOOKS

•*The Comic Stripped American* by Arthur Asa Berger (1973). One of the most perceptive essays ever done on Flash Gordon's meaning in the comics.

•*Encyclopedia of American Comics* by Ron Goulart (1990). All the basics on the characters and the creators.

•*Science Fiction Comics* by Mike Benton (1992). The best look at Flash Gordon in the comic books.



(above) March of Comics #133 (1955) giveaway, (below) March of Comics #118 (1954) is the rarest of the three MoC Flashs

FLASH GORDON MAGAZINES & FANZINES

•*Amazing Heroes* #137, March 15 1988. A great 55-page special, covering many lesser-known aspects.

•*Rocket's Blast-Comic Collector* #134, March 1977. Includes outstanding article on Alex Raymond by R.C. Harvey. If you must have one article on Raymond, this is the one.

•*Voice of Comicdom* in a 1968 issue: Ground-breaking Flash work.

•*Kaleidoscope* Vol. 2, #2, 1966. Long interview with Buster Crabbe.

•*Enterprise Special* #2 (circa 1988), with a Crabbe interview and James Van Hise's excellent coverage of the *Flesh Gordon* 1974 softcore film satire.

•*Those Enduring Matinee Heroes* #14 and 15, 1972, covering *Trip to Mars* and #27, 1974, covering *Conquers the Universe*. See *Enterprise Special* #2 or *Rocket's Blast* #134 for reprint of *TEMI*'s early material (not sure of issue numbers) covering the first Flash serial.

•*Heritage* 1A and 1B (1972). Book 1A includes an extensive article by superfan Alan Asherman with 17 stills, plus art by Jeff Jones, Frank Brunner, Gray Morrow, Mike Kaluta, Reed Crandall and Kenneth Smith. Book 1B features more of the same great stuff and a Crabbe interview.

•*Classic Video Super Hits*, Vol. 2, #1, April 1977. Uncredited 18-page article with 20 stills from the first serial.

•Larry Ivie's *Monsters and Heroes* #6, Oct. 1969. Extensive coverage by Ivie on the serials with 40 stills. A must-have for Flash fans.

•*Remember When* #6 through 11, June 1972-March 1973 newsprint fanzine. Text novelization from unspecified 1936 magazine or pressbook material, covering first eight chapters of 1936 serial. No Flash Gordon in #12; unsure if rest of reprint was ever published.

•*The King of Action*—Buster Crabbe newsprint special, 1970, from Dallas fan group that published Remember When.

•*Screen Facts Album* #1, circa 1966, from Alan G. Barbour.

•*Famous Monsters of Filmland* #10, Jan. 1961 (Warren), article "Monsters Were His Meat." Reprinted several times. Plugged as the first such article ever done on Flash.

•*Spacemen* #4, July 1962 (Warren), eight-page article "The Ace of Space," with six pages reprinted in *Spacemen Yearbook* 1965 and *On the Scene with Super Heroes*, Oct. 1966.

•*Famous Monsters of Filmland* #170, Jan. 1981, and #171, March 1981, comprehensive articles on 1980 Flash Gordon movie.

•*Filmfax* #45, June-July 1994, extensive 13-page overview on Buster Crabbe by Leonard Kohl, plus many rare images in a superb article.

•*Filmfax* #46, Aug.-Sept. 1994, excellent five-page overview on Jean Rogers by Jim Sulski.

•*Filmfax* #49, March-April 1995, seven-page article on Steve Holland and short-lived syndicated 1950s Flash Gordon TV series, by Gary Coville and Patrick Lucanio, probably the best ever done on that obscure topic.

•*Filmfax* #79, June-July 2000, long interviews with Buster Crabbe by Karl Whitezell and Buck Rogers serial co-star Constance Moore by Chris Pustorino.

•*Filmfax* #85, June-July 2001, long interview with the grandson of Charles Middleton, "Ming the Merciless" in all three Flash Gordon serials.

FLASH GORDON PAPERBACKS

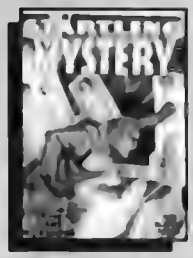
•1974-75—Six-volume Avon series of novels. Volumes 1-3 by Ron Goulart as Con Steffanson, Volume 4 by Bruce Cassiday as Steffanson and Volumes 5-6 by Cassiday as Carson Bingham. The novels are "The Lion Men of Mongo," "The Plague of Sound," "The Space Circus," "The Time Trap of Ming XIII," "The Witch Queen of Mongo" and "The War of the Cybernauts." These are the best novelizations of Flash Gordon.

•1980-81—Six-volume Ace Tempo series of novels from 1980-81 and three-volume Temp series (numbered 4-6) of comic strip reprints during the same period, all inspired by the release of the 1980 movie. There was an earlier three-volume series of Ace Tempo strip reprints circa 1970-71

•1980—Flash Gordon movie novelization by Arthur Byron. Cover from Jove.

•1960s or 70s—Two undated Pinnacle paperback reprints of Al Williamson's Flash Gordon King Comics work—"On the Lost Continent of Mongo" and "The Ice World."

•1976—Flash Gordon paperback "In the Sand World of Mongo," uncredited illustrations and novel for young readers by Horace J. Elias from Harper & Row.



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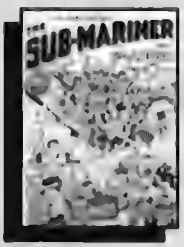

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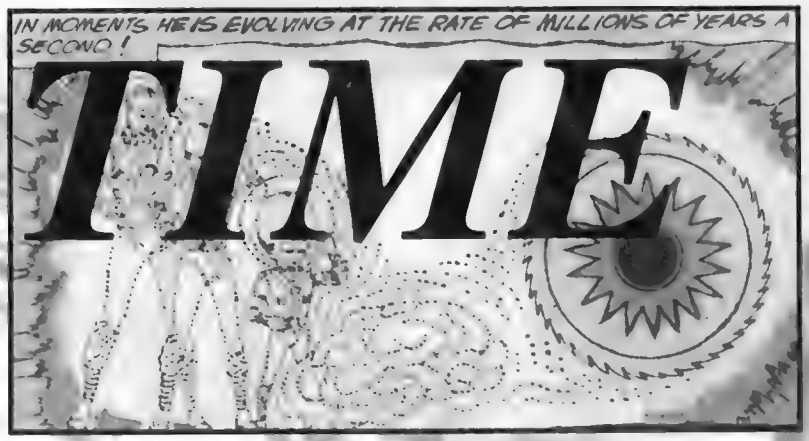


AND SURE ENOUGH, AS JORD RANDALL INSTALLS HIS GADGET AND THEN TAKES THE CONTROLS...
WE'RE FLYING! OH, YOU'RE WONDERFUL--MARVELOUS--!
MISS DRU-- I MEAN MORNA--!

Special Guest Star: Julie Schwartz!

by Will Murray

The first time I ever saw Murphy Anderson's work was on the cover of one of the earliest comic books I ever bought, *Strange Adventures* #137, featuring "Parade of the Space-Toys!" around Christmas 1961. Many of these eye-catching covers like *Mystery in Space* #74 and *Justice League of America* #10, are burned into my memory to this day. To me, whether penciling or inking, Murphy epitomized the pristine DC house look of their science-fiction titles until that dark month in 1964 when premier DC SF editor Julius Schwartz abandoned *Strange Adventures*, *Mystery in Space*, and others in a stable swap with Batman line editor Jack Schiff.

I first met Murphy in the company of Julie Schwartz at one of the annual PulpCons during the 1980s. I found him to be as charming and pleasant as his radiant work suggests. After several annual PulpCon encounters, it behooved me to interview Murphy in the company of his longtime editorial confederate. Here is that three-way exchange, recorded on July 11, 1987.

ART© DC COMICS INC.

MURPHY ANDERSON WITH

Comic Book Marketplace: How did you become interested in comics?

Murphy Anderson: Just as a kid, really. My mother was a schoolteacher in Nashville, North Carolina. Having been trained as a teacher, when I bothered her a lot about reading the comics pages to me, she got tired of it and sat down and taught me to read. So I could read them for myself. I was about four or five years old. So the comics have been a great influence on me ever since.

Julius Schwartz: Where did you get that name Murphy?
Anderson: Do we have to say this?

Schwartz: Yes. What's your full name?
Anderson: Murphy C. How's that?

Schwartz: Tell us what the C. stands for.
Anderson: Clyde. Murphy Clyde Anderson, Jr. My grandfather hung that name on my father. My father was the fourth of 12 children. I guess he was planning on having a lot of kids to name, so he started out with obscure names to begin with. I'm sure there are some Murphys in the family tree somewhere.

Schwartz: I don't know why I'm doing all the interviewing. (Laughs) Let's get back to the comics that you were reading.

Anderson: We're talking about 1930-31. Of course, in those early days, they were the humorous strips, like *Muggs* and *Skeeter.* I first really became hooked on adventure comics. Mostly, the newspaper carried the NEA strips, so I saw *Alley Oop* and *Captain Easy*. Those were my influences. And then there was a giveaway, a free comic called *The Gulf Comic Weekly* given out at the Gulf service stations. They introduced a character called Wings Winfair, that I later learned was based on Flash Gordon. But I hadn't seen *Flash Gordon* at that time. And along the way, the comic books had started. I started reading reprints of *Buck Rogers* and some of the others, and became aware of them. Then one of my friends steered me onto a pulp magazine. It was an air pulp,

Murphy Anderson and Julie Schwartz chat with pulp/comics writer Ryerson Johnson at PulpCon.

about World War I airplanes. But one of the stories was science fiction. That got me to looking. And then I discovered *Astounding* and *Amazing*—books of that sort. I was really hooked then. I read those more avidly really than comic books. I liked comic books for the art, not for the story content. Most of the strips had some elements of science fiction, or fantasy. *The Phantom*, *Mandrake the Magician*, *Brick Bradford*. You might say *Alley Oop* was science fiction, loosely. Of course, *Buck Rogers*. Even *Tarzan* had elements of fantasy—the Egyptian sequence and the Viking sequence that Foster was doing. So I was hooked on all fronts, really. Then little by little, the comic books started bringing out fresh material. Superman of course was a big impact. All the kids in school were really excited about Superman. I bought the first one.

Schwartz: Well, congratulations, Mr. Anderson. You can now retire!

Anderson: I don't have it any longer. That might or might not have been one of the books in my collection that wound up in the National Periodical Publications-Fawcett legal battle. The Marvel comics, I have most of those first issues.

CBM: Didn't Frank R. Paul do the cover to the first *Marvel Comics*?

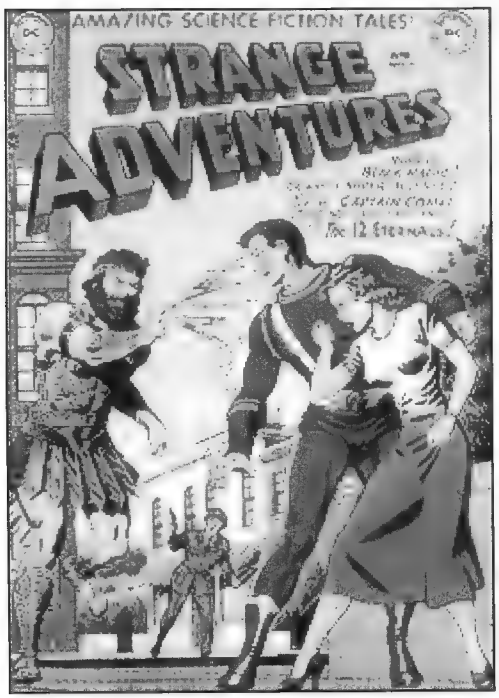
Anderson: Right.

Schwartz: Frank R. Paul was doing work for *Marvel Tales* or *Marvel Science Stories*, whatever it was called.

CBM: The pulps. But he also did the first Human Torch cover of *Marvel Comics* #1.

Schwartz: Do you remember Gernsback put out a comic where Frank R. Paul did practically all the illustrating? My friend Charlie Hornig, who was managing editor of *Wonder Stories*, edited it. *Superworld Comics*, I think it was. There were three issues.

Strange Adventures #19 (Apr 1952) Anderson provided an exemplary DC "future science versus past magic" cover featuring Captain Comet. **Strange Adventures** #23 (Aug 1952) Murph's "last woman on Earth" sure is shapely! No wonder the aliens seem so excited about the footage they're shooting.



Anderson: Yeah, I remember it now that you're talking about it.

CBM: Goodman supposedly got his start with Gernsback.

Anderson: It's like when Will Eisner had a lot of syndicated things. When the demand for comics started, he pulled "Hawks of the Sea," "The Count of Monte Cristo," "Wilton of the West" and other features. I think those were planned to be Sunday pages. They cut them apart and made comic book pages out of them. Will has often said that people give him credit for inventing unusual page layouts." He laughs. And I think he's selling himself short. But he said, "That was just to make them fit on the page. That's why we had these unusual layouts. When those books started appearing, especially those by Will Eisner and Lou Fine, doing such knockout stuff, that really turned me on. At that point, I hadn't learned to draw like that. I had been a big fan of Popeye. I used to copy all the Popeye Sunday pages. To this day, I can still do a pretty good Popeye. It was maybe too bad for me that I turned in that direction, doing serious material, as opposed to humorous material, because I still like the humorous stuff.

CBM: I can't envision you doing Popeye. I can't imagine Adam Strange without Murphy Anderson.

Anderson: Kirby hit the scene about that time also. But his stuff was not as a realistic, so it didn't turn me on like the more real type of drawings.

CBM: How old were you when you took up drawing?

Anderson: I have recollection of being in the third or fourth grade, with two or three friends who also liked to draw. We'd sit in the back of the room when we could manage to get seats back there, and draw these elaborate pictures that were based on the movie serials.

We'd have these elaborate subterranean caverns with the submarines and airplanes and all of those sorts of things. And that's how I got started drawing. One thing led to another. I started trying to draw realistic pictures. I could draw cowboys and I could draw airplanes.

CBM: How did you get started drawing professionally?

MURHPY: In junior high and high school, I was fortunate to have teachers that encouraged me. They didn't frown on comic books and the format. So in junior high they let me do a supplement for their mimeograph newspaper. I did a feature I called "The Time Traveller," real comic book stuff. Then in high school I got involved in journalism. I did all the editorial cartoons and spot drawings in the school paper. I wound up in my senior year as co-editor of the paper. At that point I was seriously considering journalism as a career. Of course, I was extremely interested in comic books. And I wanted to break in. I had a teacher in high school who was a very good artist. She was coming to New York to visit some friends, and she took some of my pages where I had tried to draw comic

Murphy Anderson on Science Fiction Art

by S. C. Ringgenberg

Ringgenberg: What led you to your drawing career?

Anderson: Well, I just had a great interest in comics and I was around when the first comic books started appearing. And I sort of grew up with them, you might say. I guess the first book appeared when I was eight or nine years old. Of course I was following the newspaper strips probably a little more carefully than the early comic books.

Ringgenberg: Which strips were your favorites?

Anderson: *Buck Rogers*. That was an obvious favorite, and there was *Tarzan*, and *Flash Gordon, Mandrake the Magician, The Phantom*.

Ringgenberg: So it seems like you were always drawn to the science fiction strips. Were you reading the science fiction pulps at the same time you were looking at the comics?

Anderson: Well, yeah. A little later because I would say '38, '39, I'd started to read pulps.

Ringgenberg: Where was your first job?

Anderson: At Fiction House.

Ringgenberg: You did a number of different strips for them, didn't you?

Anderson: Well, basically, I did "Star Pirate," but I did a couple of other things. I did a "Suicide Smith" and then I did filler material, some for *Wings Comics*, and a lot of filler material for *Planet*. I did pulp illustrations for them also.

Ringgenberg: Were you penciling and inking?

Anderson: Yes. Both.

[continued on following pages]

books, and brought them to DC, as a matter of fact. They encouraged her. And she came back full of encouragement for me. So I kept doing that as a hobby, doing my own comics. I have somewhere in my attic a seven or eight page story of the Ray that I wrote and drew for myself.

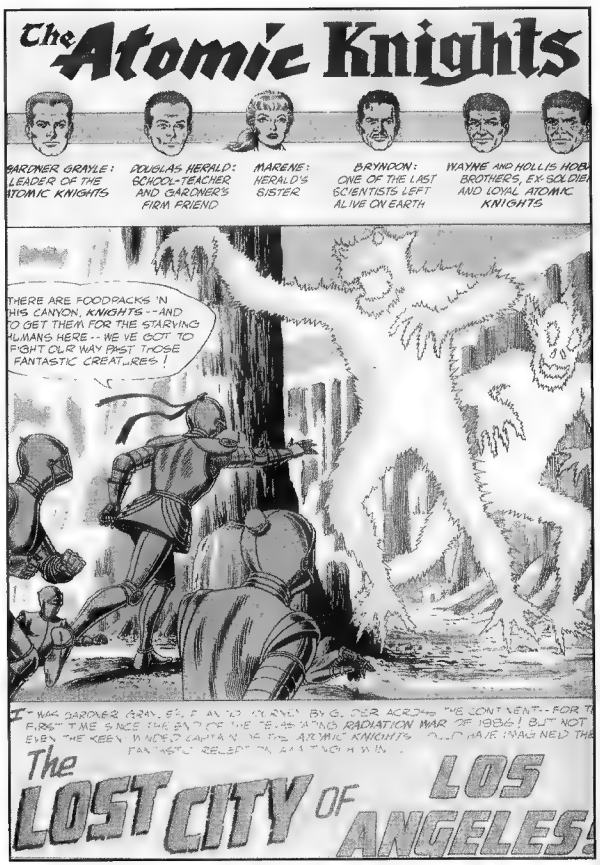
CBM: Did you ever submit it to Quality?

Anderson: That's another little story. I came to New York when I was a co-editor of the newspaper. We belonged to Columbia Scholastic Press Association and they invited us up for a big convention. While I was there, I took advantage of it to go call on Quality Comics. That's where all the people whose work I loved were. I talked with Jack Cole, Lou Fine and George Brenner. There were several others. They encouraged me enough that after I graduated from high school, I wanted to do this.

CBM: So when did you break into the field?

Anderson: At the University of North Carolina, I knew I was going into the service shortly. This was wartime. I had sent in a cover that I had drawn to Fox or Holyoke, that was publishing *The Blue Beetle* at that time. They wrote back and said they had wanted to use it. Would I write a story? So I sat down, but what with being in college and all my other work, I couldn't get it out. So I talked to my father. Before I went in the Navy, I wanted to try my luck in New York. He thought it was a terrible idea, but I pestered him so much he finally gave in. He said, "Well, here's a hundred bucks. When that's gone, you've got to come home." So I went down to New York. I found nothing at Quality. And DC wouldn't really talk to me. At Marvel, I'm pretty sure it was Stan Lee I talked to. They gave me some encouragement and a piece of paper and told me the proper size, and to make some drawings and come back in a week or so. But my hundred bucks was shrinking. And on Friday I still had no encouragement. I had called on what I thought was Fiction House. That was Jerry Iger. He told me to come back in a couple of weeks. I finally worked my way down to Harry Chesler. I had always liked Chesler's books. I called on him, and he said, "Kid, I'm not publishing comic books right now. But I like what you do." And he said, "Why don't you try Fiction House? They put out a science-fiction comic book." I said, "Gee, I've already talked to Mr. Iger." And he cut me off and said, "Iger? That's not Fiction House!" He said, "Wait a minute." And he picked up the phone and called Jack Byrne and gave me such a buildup over the phone that he said, "OK, you've got an appointment at 10:30." At 9:00 in the morning, I was down there. I talked to Jack Byrne, and he hired me on the spot.

CBM: Byrne had a long career editing pulps and comics for Fiction House and Munsey.


The Atomic Knights
GARDNER GRAYLE: LEADER OF THE ATOMIC KNIGHTS
DOUGLAS HERALD: SCHOOL-TEACHER AND GARDNER'S FIRM FRIEND
MARENE: HERALD'S SISTER
BRYNDON: ONE OF THE LAST SCIENTISTS LEFT ALIVE ON EARTH
WAYNE AND HOLLIS HOBA BROTHERS, EX-SOLDIE AND LOYAL ATOMIC KNIGHTS
THERE ARE FOODPACKS IN THIS CANYON, KNIGHTS -- AND TO GET THEM FOR THE STARVING HUMANS HERE -- WE'VE GOT TO FIGHT OUR WAY PAST THOSE FANTASTIC CREAT...RES!
The LOST CITY OF LOS ANGELES!

(below) **Strange Adventures** #137 (Feb 1962) One of the first 12-cent issues—with Murph's cover screaming, "I'm worth the extra two cents—really I am!"

(far right) **Strange Adventures** #126 (Mar 1961) John Broome and Muphy Anderson with editor Julius Schwartz created this memorable Silver Age series of heroes who fought to restore the country after an atomic war.

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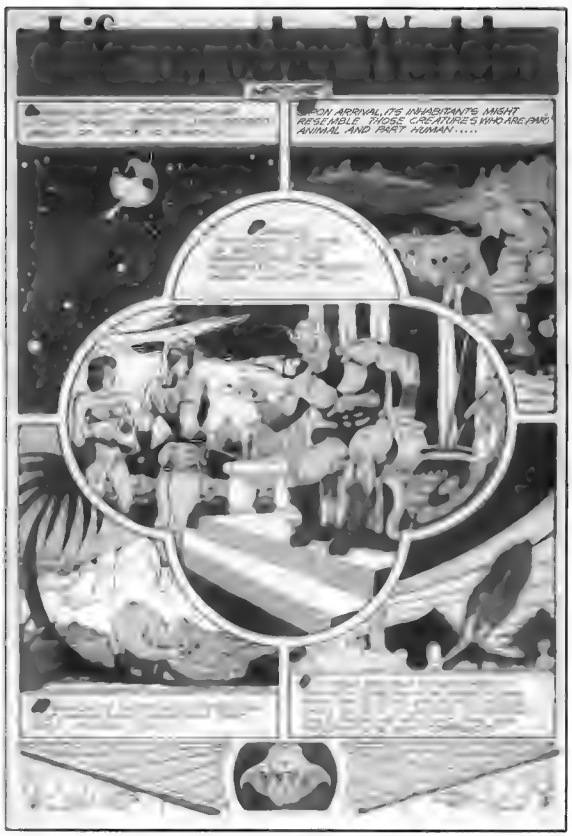
STRANGE ADVENTURES
"PARADE of the SPACE-TOYS!"
HERE THEY ARE -- EARTH'S LAST HOPE OF DRIVING OFF THE ALIENS WHO HAVE INVADED OUR WORLD!

ART © DC COMICS INC.

Anderson: He was running the shop, you might say. He and Malcolm Reiss. The comics group was right on the corner of 53rd and Fifth Avenue, where I go regularly these days. Then it was 670 Fifth Avenue. Now the building is long gone and it's three sixes. But I would sit in the art room there and look out at just about the same scene you'd see from Julie's office when he faced out on 53rd Street.

CBM: Fiction House basically knocked off many of their pulps for their comic books. *Jungle Comics*' Kaanga is basically *Jungle Stories*' Ki-Gor with a different name.

Anderson: It's interesting because there was a great play between Kaanga and Ki-Gor. They were pretty much the same character. They just switched the names. I think quite a few of the plots were used from one to the other. I know at one point they took an old Kaanga story and used it to illustrate a Ki-Gor story. Obviously, for the Ki-Gor story they took the plot and made a pulp novel out of it.



ART© FICTION HOUSE

Planet Comics #56 (Sep 1948) contains this early Murphy Anderson page of "Life on Other Worlds" exploring the possibilities of the planet Neptune.

Murphy Anderson on Science Fiction Art continued

Ringgenberg: You also did a small amount of writing for Fiction House, didn't you?

Anderson: Right. "Life on Other Worlds" was the title.

Ringgenberg: So, after your stint at Fiction House you moved on to some other companies like Ziff-Davis, I believe.

Anderson: Well, yeah. I worked for Ziff-Davis, freelancing. When I lived in Chicago, basically. And I was stationed out there in the Navy and I called on the editor, Ray Palmer, at the time.

Ringgenberg: So you were actually freelancing when you were still in the service?

Anderson: Yeah. Yeah. Well, they didn't really care. I mean, the particular situation I was in at that time I had, like a regular job with the Navy, you know, eight to four. At lunch hour I went over. It was only a two or three block walk to the Ziff-Davis offices and I talked to the editor and he gave me an assignment. And Fiction House sent me some work. They did that with a number of their artists.

Ringgenberg: Would you mail your work in?

Anderson: Yeah.

Ringgenberg: Well, I also see here that you did a bit of work on *Buck Rogers* in '49.

Anderson: Actually I started with them in '47; they hired me on retainer. I would come in and work in the offices there. And I did work on designing things for Buck, you know, in preparation for taking over, and I actually worked on the strip at that time for a little over two years I think.

Ringgenberg: Were you handling pencils and inks on the strip?

Anderson: Right.

Ringgenberg: Were you doing the daily and the Sunday, or just the Sunday?

Anderson: No, just the dailies.

Ringgenberg: Was Rick Yager still doing the Sundays?

Anderson: Yeah, he was doing the Sundays. He was writing and drawing the Sunday page.

Ringgenberg: Would he write the continuity for the daily page also?

Anderson: No, there was a writer, Bob Williams, who used the pen name Bob Barton on that.

After *Buck Rogers* I had moved back to North Carolina to work with my father. When I moved back to New York, I

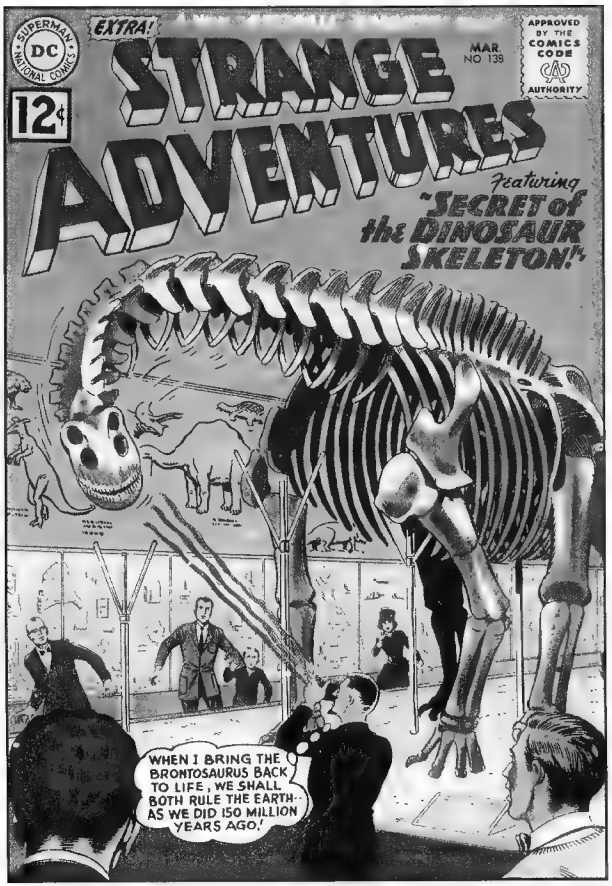
MURPHY ANDERSON (and Julius Schwartz)

CBM: So what did you do for Fiction House?

Anderson: At Fiction House, they sat me down and my first script was for Star Pirate. My first week was spent penciling that story. This was for *Planet Comics*. Then they asked me about doing some filler material. They asked me if I could do a three-page feature in each issue called "Life on Other Worlds." That was based to a great degree on Frank R. Paul's interpretations. I didn't copy him, but the spirit of the thing was similar to what they were doing in *Amazing* and *Fantastic*. At the same time I was doing quite a few illustrations for *Planet Stories*. There again they asked me to do two or three sheets of spot drawings to fill dead space in the magazine. If you look at those in that period, '44-'45, you'll see all my little spots used throughout.

CBM: Were you on staff?

Anderson: They agreed to let me freelance. And I went back to Greensboro before going into the service. At boot camp, they evidently had every sailor on file, because I was contacted by the post's newspaper, and I did aircraft identification comics for that. As soon as Fiction House found where I was, they sent me scripts in the mail! I continued to do Star Pirate. I didn't miss a Star Pirate in all this time. I built a little inventory before going into the Navy. And I did a couple while I was in the Navy. It worked out so I didn't miss any. At that point, I came back to Fiction House in New York, but my wife was in Chicago and I finally worked out a deal with them to freelance and went back to Chicago. In Chicago, I started working for Ziff-Davis. Then I answered an ad in the newspaper, and it turned out they were looking for someone to draw *Buck Rogers*. I wound up with the job. I succeeded Dick Calkins.


EXTRA!
DC
SUPERMAN-NATIONAL COMICS
MAR. NO 138
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
12¢
STRANGE ADVENTURES
featuring "SECRET of the DINOSAUR SKELETON!"
WHEN I BRING THE BRONTOSAURUS BACK TO LIFE, WE SHALL BOTH RULE THE EARTH-- AS WE DID 150 MILLION YEARS AGO!

Strange Adventures #138 (Mar 1962) Murphy's realistic brontosaurus skeleton responds to a ray-treatment on this intriguing cover.

CBM: Is that when you did *Lars of Mars* for Ziff-Davis?

Anderson: That's a little later. Ziff-Davis at that point was strictly Chicago. They only published pulps. I did work on *Amazing* and *Fantastic*. The syndicate wanted me to draw publicity stuff while they geared everything up for me to take over Buck. So for about six months, I worked in the syndicate office doing that sort of thing, and doing my freelance. I wound up the Fiction House stuff that way. Then I started in late '47 on Buck.

CBM: That must have been very exciting for you.

Anderson: Oh, yeah, it was. That was extremely gratifying. To this day, as far as comics are concerned, I think Buck Rogers was my favorite character.

CBM: Who did the scripts?

Anderson: They hired a radio writer who had written Sky King. He had won several awards for his efforts on Sky King. His name was Bob Williams, but he chose to use a pen name, Bob Barton, on the *Buck Rogers* strip. Bob was a very interesting man, but he never quite understood writing a comic strip. He tended to draw pictures with his words. You know what I mean. Rather than complement the pictures, you could read the balloons and the whole story was there. As a result, I think a lot of the balloons were much too heavy.

CBM: How long did you do *Buck*?

Anderson: In the first go 'round, I drew it for two and a half years. I had quit *Buck* because of some differences with the owner. They weren't on a personal level. It was strictly financial. In the late '50s, Sputnik went up. The syndicate had a new salesman who was in Texas when Sputnik was launched, and the other salesman hadn't made it clear to him that you can't sell *Buck Rogers*, so

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don't even bother taking it out of your bag. Historically, you couldn't sell *Buck Rogers* any longer. And he sold every newspaper he called on from Texas all the way to Chicago. So *Buck* had a chance to be launched again. At that point, they were unhappy with Rick Yager, for what reasons I really don't know. They had already given notice, and asked me if I was interested in coming back.

CBM: When did you start to work for DC?

Anderson: Well, in 1950 I tried to quit *Buck Rogers*. I moved back to North Carolina for a time. My father was after me again to come back and work for him in the taxicab business. I freelanced for Ziff-Davis right along. We did that for eight or nine months and Herman Bolland, the art director for Ziff-Davis, called me very agitated and said, "Murph, you really need to get in touch with Jerry Siegel. He's our new director of the comic book division that we're starting. Knowing your comic book background, we thought you might be interested." So I got in touch with Jerry. And that's when I came back into comic books. I had stopped with Fiction House when I took on *Buck Rogers*. They were really in the doldrums. They had no work. But Jerry Siegel was starting stuff that was right down my alley. And he was of course a great fan of *Buck Rogers* in his own way. That's why I came back to New York. They kept me very busy for two or three months after we moved. Then one day I came in with work for Jerry, he said, "Gee, Murph, I don't have a script for you. The writers didn't bring the work in. It may be a few days before I get a script." And I panicked. The next day I called on every publisher I could think of. I called on DC.

The CYCLE of TIME!
WE'RE DONE FOR! WE'LL BE THIS THING APART LIKE AN OLD WATCH!
TAMPERING WITH TIME IS A DANGEROUS THING... ONE CHANCE
TO BE ABLE TO TRAVEL INTO THE PAST OR FUTURE AND BACK TO THE PRESENT AGAIN WITHOUT SUFFERING THE MOST TERRIBLE AGONY SYSTEM OF CRIME EVER DEVISED! AND YET, FRED MCCANN HAD OVERLOOKED ONE THING! TIME IS A REGULAR WATCH AND EVENTUALLY EVERY WATCH MUST STOP!
The Cycle of DEATH

ART© ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING CO.

Weird Thrillers #2 (Winter 1951) "The Cycle of Time" was a triumphant sci-fi yarn from this Ziff-Davis title—a time-travel paradox perfectly paced by smooth Anderson art.

Murphy Anderson on Science Fiction Art continued

came back basically to work for Ziff-Davis. They were moving their offices to New York, and they had appointed Jerry Siegel as editorial director of a comic book line that they were planning. They contacted me from Chicago and made it interesting enough and wanted me enough that I moved to New York. The Fiction House thing was already pretty much a dead issue. They were having a lot of troubles, and a year or so later, they closed.

Ringgenberg: A lot of the science fiction pulps went under in the fifties, didn't they?

Anderson: Right, right. And their comic book line wasn't doing well, either.

Ringgenberg: Well, how did it come about that you worked for National?

Anderson: Well, that's sort of an involved story. As I say I came back to New York basically newly married. My wife and I married in '48 and I came to New York about 1950, I think it was. And we took on an apartment and all the things that go with it, set up, you know, housekeeping in Bayside, New York. And I brought a job in to Jerry Siegel one day and he said, 'Murph, I'm sorry. There are no more scripts. The writers haven't brought the work in. And it might be as much as a week before I get a script for you.' Well, I panicked because I was counting on steady work, so I went home and got my portfolio and called on several publishers. And one of those that I called on was DC. Murray Boltinoff interviewed me and he said Julie Schwartz is not in today but I'm sure he'd like to talk to you. The next day I did see Julie and he gave me work. Ironically, the same day Jerry called me and the work had come in from his writer, so I was suddenly swamped with work.

Ringgenberg: What was your first job for DC?

Anderson: It was a story for *Strange Adventures* or *Mystery in Space*, I believe. *Mystery in Space* was new then and I started to work in either the first or second issue. And *Strange Adventures* had already been running for a few issues, so I got into that around issue six, something like that. I became part of Julie's team of artists, you might say. I mean he basically had four or five artists and kept them busy. He had them categorized, even at that time, into pencilers and inkers and I was sort of a little different in that I penciled and inked. And even then, when the deadline would be a little closer or he needed me for something else, he would have me just pencil and then someone else would ink the work.

MURPHY ANDERSON (and Julius Schwartz)

Murray Boltinoff interviewed me. He said, "Well I personally don't have any stuff for you, but Julie Schwartz is the guy you need. Come back tomorrow and see Julie." I did, of course. But at that point I called on Marvel, and Stan Lee sort of tossed a script across his desk to me. I called on EC. They said, we don't have anything right this moment but we will get in touch with you. I'd thought it was just a polite brush-off. Anyhow, I went to see Julie the next day and he gave me a script. Then Jerry Siegel called. Scripts were coming in! (Laughs)

Suddenly I was busier than the cat on a hot tin roof! Another little aside, Al Feldstein did call me from EC. And I had to turn him down because his page rate was $10 less than Ziff-Davis's. Which was a very big amount in those days. I said, "As much as I'd like to work with you, I can't." He told me, "Well, you get the pages with the balloons already in them." Which was true. That would have been a help, already lettered. I think in the long run it was probably better for me as far as work is concerned, that I didn't take it. I would have worked my tail off like Wood and Jack Davis and some of those other guys, I'm sure. And then suddenly found after the Senate hearings, that it was pretty difficult to get work in comic books for quite awhile.

DC
MYSTERY IN SPACE
BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
IN THIS ISSUE... AN ADAM STRANGE THRILLER!
A HIGH-FLYING HAWKMAN ADVENTURE... "The SUPER-MOTORIZED MENACE!"

Mystery In Space #89 (Feb 1964) Hawkman winged his way into the title for a few issues. This one features an exemplary Anderson hero-versus-villain cover.

Schwartz: What was that first DC story?

Anderson: I think it was an Edmond Hamilton story, but I'm not sure. It was for *Strange Adventures*, I believe. I don't recall the title. It was a modern-day story with a scientist. It wasn't space opera.

CBM: How long did you work for Stan Lee?

Anderson: That was the only one I did for Marvel because I was in this bind because of all this work. I took the story in to have it lettered. Then I picked it up again. Then I got busy with work for Julie. Stan Lee got very upset with me because he couldn't get me on the telephone. I didn't have a telephone. There was no way anyone could reach me. He sent me a telegram. So I went down and called him. Before I could say anything, he just said, "Get that G-D work down here. Right now." So I took it down. I had inked two pages on it. And penciled the whole thing. And I got paid for pencils and one page of inks. I just decided I didn't need to work with Stan Lee at that point.

CBM: What was it like to work for Jerry Siegel?

Anderson: Well, he was very nice, and a very good man to work for. We talked about a feature that he had in mind. He wanted to call it *Lars of Mars*. The idea was sort of a cross between Buck Rogers and Superman. So we did the two issues of it. For many reasons, the book never got beyond the two issues. It was partly the Kefauver Hearings and a lot of things going on with Ziff-Davis. They found that the comic books were not what they thought they might be, and they slowly phased them out.

CBM: What were his scripts like?

Anderson: Well, Jerry was really a marvel, I think, with his economy of words. He gave me a 14- or 15-page *Lars of Mars* script. And everything was on two typewritten pages. All the captions, all the balloons, and all the scene descriptions. Everything I needed to do the story. I'd never encountered a writer that could be that brief.

CBM: What was it like to work for DC at the dawn of the Silver Age?

Anderson: At the start of the '50s, Julie had me doing basically just stories for the two magazines until he had a need for someone to do "Cris KL-99," which was an Edmond Hamilton story, very much like *Captain Future*. I really enjoyed that because *Captain Future* was one of my

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favorite pulps. I think no one could write a story that was more science fiction to my taste than Edmond Hamilton. There were a few others I liked just as well, but none better. It was a real pleasure to work on his scripts. And then Julie had a need for someone to take over Captain Comet. Carmine, as he had done with a number of features, had started it. Then he was pushed into service on some other new property. And I drew that for three or four years easily. In the beginning, penciling and inking, and later just penciling. In some cases, working together with Seymour Barry, Joe Giella or even Bernie Sachs to give me a hand on the inking.

CBM: Wasn't Sy Barry's work a touchstone for the DC house look in those days?

Anderson: I'm not so sure I would agree with that, although I can see where you would think that. He inked a lot of Alex Toth. He inked a lot of Carmine. He inked some of my work. But this style was much like his brother's, so if you want it trace it back that way, I would say that there was a

The Adventures of
Chris KL-99
IN HIS DARING EXPLORATIONS OF THE UNIVERSE, CHRIS KL-99, THE COLUMBUS OF THE 21 ST CENTURY, HAS HAD TWO LOYAL COMRADES, HALK, THE RED MARTIAN, AND JERO, THE VENUSIAN, HAVE RISKED WITH HIM THE PERILS OF FARAWAY UNKNOWN WORLDS. BUT NOT EVEN CHRIS HAS KNOWN THE STRANGE, DRAMATIC STORY OF WHY HALK BECAME A STAR-ROVER! ONLY NOW, AS HE FIGHTS TO HELP THE DESPERATE PEOPLE OF A DISTANT PLANET, DOES CHRIS KL-99 FINALLY LEARN THE GRIM SECRET OF--
THE
EXILE
OF
SPACE

Strange Adventures #9 (Jun 1951) SF writer Edmond Hamilton and SF artist Murphy Anderson do their interplanetary thing in this early ish of DC's longest-running SF title.

Murphy Anderson on Science Fiction Art continued

Ringgenberg: At the time what did you prefer doing, penciling or inking?

Anderson: Well, I preferred doing both. I still do. During those early days I did "Captain Comet." Julie likes to think of him as actually the first of the modern day super heroes. He had these mental powers and so forth. And there was another series that Edmond Hamilton wrote. I did two or three of those for *Strange Adventures*. I believe it was called "Chris KL-99." Julie had mostly pulp writers. Gardner Fox was a pulp writer. I knew Gardner very well because we'd often go to lunch with Julie when Gardner would come in, and I'd be in, and we'd go to lunch. And the same for John Broome. John was another of Julie's pulp writers.

Ringgenberg: You wound up working on a fair number of stories that those gentlemen scripted.

Anderson: Oh, yes. Well, Gardner did the Hawkman. He did the very first Golden Age Hawkman, I think. It was a natural for him to continue on when they revived the character. I had been slated to work on "Adam Strange" but, of course, when I took the again-offered Buck Rogers assignment I couldn't.

Ringgenberg: And was the character supposed to be intended as kind of a Buck Rogers type?

Anderson: Yeah, right, exactly.

Ringgenberg: There was also a little bit of John Carter of Mars in that character in the way that he kept going back and forth between the planets.

Anderson: That's true. I mean he was a modern-day man but was a, you know, I mean, what was he? An archeologist, I believe, with a museum. You have to wonder if perhaps they didn't use our character as the base in the movie that they brought out. Anyhow, I think a lot of the movies were based on comic books. That's coming out more and more that a lot of today's big directors and producers were comic books fans.

Ringgenberg: I know George Lucas was a big *Flash Gordon* fan.

Anderson: Right.

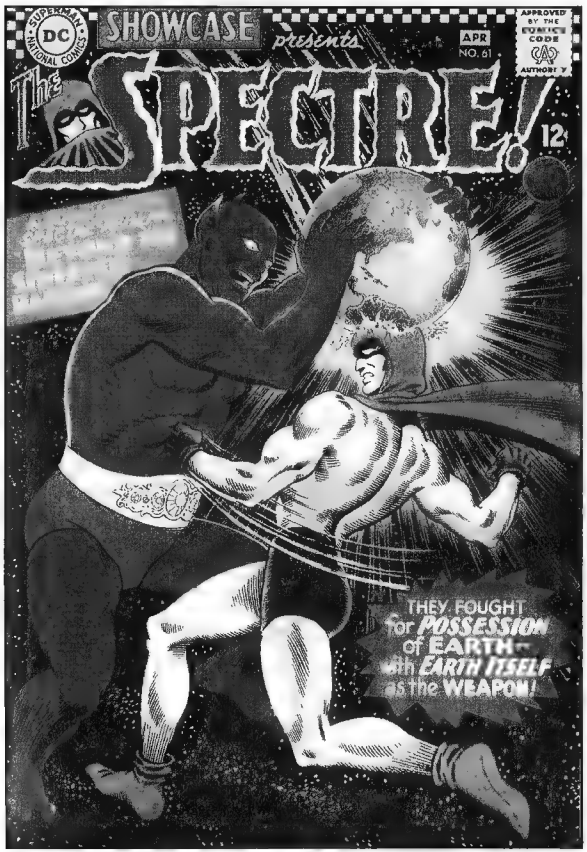
Ringgenberg: You actually designed Adam Strange's costume?

Anderson: Well, I can't say that Gil did it exactly like I'd drawn it. But I know I worked on that cover, and I don't have it anymore. The only thing that survives is a letter that I wrote to Julie at the time to accompany it. But as I recall

Dan Barry influence indirectly. But Seymour had his own strengths. He had a more forceful inking style than Dan did. Dan's stuff was more decorative and more arty, while Seymour's was very businesslike. But I think we all were from basically the same school. Dan's influences were very similar to mine. He had a great love of Lou Fine, Alex Raymond and Foster. So all of our styles tended to be somewhat alike. There was no pressure put on us to work in any particular way. We may have been hired because of that, having a certain look that they wanted. But no one ever said draw like this or ink like that. So I was really doing my own thing right along.

CBM: Tell me about shifting from science fiction to superheroes. Did it start with "Adam Strange"?

Anderson: I have to put it this way: I don't know if Julie remembers all of this as clearly as I do. But I used to come up from North Carolina. I had moved in 1953 to Greensboro to work in my dad's business once again, and take the Famous Artists Course. But I continued doing covers for Julie. I would say the bigger percentage of the *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery in Space* covers. And an occasional story, and an occasional war job for Kanigher. Then as I related to you, Sputnik went up and they called me back on *Buck Rogers*. But just before when this happened, Julie had me work on a cover for a new character that he had in mind. I designed a character, and drew the costume. It had to do with a huge pendulum. Julie wasn't happy with the way the layout had turned out. And I had to leave. I had a train to catch. I said to him, "Well, I think I know what you want. I'll take it home and I'll do it up. And if you don't like it, then you don't use it, that's all." Well, it came back to Julie and he didn't like it. So Gil Kane redrew that cover. But the costume was the way I had designed it. Later, more or less, Carmine picked up on it, and did it the way I had worked it out. So intervening was the *Buck Rogers* thing. So I was never involved with Adam Strange in those early days because I was put on *Buck Rogers*.



Showcase #61 (Apr 1966) Murphy drew the Silver Age Spectre with a nice sense-of-wonder at the cosmic nature of the character.

CBM: That was the famous "Planet and the Pendulum" *Showcase* cover. But you designed his costume?

Anderson: Right. I don't have that cover to back it up, but I know that's the way I had designed it.

CBM: Is that the way you remember it, Julie?

Schwartz: The only thing that I remember about that is that Gil Kane never put sleeves on Adam Strange, and we let it be like that. If you look at the cover, Adam Strange has no sleeves.

CBM: That must have been the second story because Adam Strange wore no uniform in the first story.

Schwartz: Right.

CBM: How did that character come about?

Schwartz: One day Jack Schiff and I were asked to come up with a couple of science fiction characters. And we had a choice of doing one in the present day and doing one in the future. So I opted for the present day, and Jack Schiff did the "Space Ranger," which was set in the future. So I called in Gardner Fox. I said, "I even have a name for you, Adam Strange." Adam of course standing for first. And Strange I guess for Strange Adventures. It had a nice ring to it. And we worked out a plot. Although I never saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, some people tell me the beginning of the first Adam Strange story is very similar to the beginning of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Of course Adam was caught by the Zeta beam.

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Anderson: I had the impression that you meant for me to do that feature. Then I got involved with *Buck Rogers*, and couldn't.

Schwartz: Who did it, Mike Sekowsky?
Anderson: Yeah. He did the first couple.

Schwartz: Obviously it was a success. It wasn't even called "Adam Strange." It was called "Adventures on Other Worlds."

Anderson: I remember we talked at length about a rocket belt, and other Buck Rogers type of stuff. I never liked Carmine's rocket belt.

Schwartz: Well, I always remember the first Buck Rogers story that appeared in *Amazing Stories*. It was called "Armageddon, 2419 A.D."

CBM: Yeah. Clearly Buck and his rocket belt was the forerunner of Adam Strange's rig. But I always thought that the

P.S. Magazine #257 (Apr 1974) This potentially grim "fable from 2074 AD" is one of the many great SF covers Murphy produced in his long association with the Army "maintenance mag."

Murphy Anderson on Science Fiction Art continued

the belt and the helmet, the headgear were basically as I drew them

Ringgenberg: I always thought that he had one of the most attractive costumes of any DC character. It was very clean. It seemed like you were very busy in the early sixties. You worked on "The Atomic Knights."

Anderson: "The Atomic Knights" was formed basically because I bellyached so much about not being able to pencil and Julie finally came up with that. He may have had the idea in the back of his mind but that was a story that appeared only in every third issue of *Strange Adventures*.

Ringgenberg: Did you have anything to do with conceiving the strip or did you just draw it?

Anderson: No. I had very little to do with the conception of that because he had that in the works. Gee, maybe I'm wrong in what I'm thinking about him doing it for me, but he just asked me if I'd be interested in doing a strip like that, and of course that sounded great to me. It was a very difficult strip to do because of all the suits of armor and so many characters involved.

Ringgenberg: Did you do much research on different kinds of armor?

Anderson: Yeah, yeah. I tried to make the armor as realistic as possible, although it's not at all like the armor they wore in the middle, in the dark ages, or right after, you know. In the days of, well, Robin Hood and King Arthur are identified with it, but armor actually wasn't in use during those periods, not like it was a little later.

Ringgenberg: During your whole career how much influence did research play on your work?

Anderson: Well, I tried to research everything, and when I'd draw a specific thing I'd try to make it as accurate as possible.

Ringgenberg: Would you work from photo reference?
Anderson: Yeah, partly, and mostly for [accuracy].

Ringgenberg: One thing I noticed from looking at some of your old work from *Planet Comics*, and the work in the sixties, is that it really changed, the way it looked. Was that due to just learning more techniques, or did your approach to the art change?

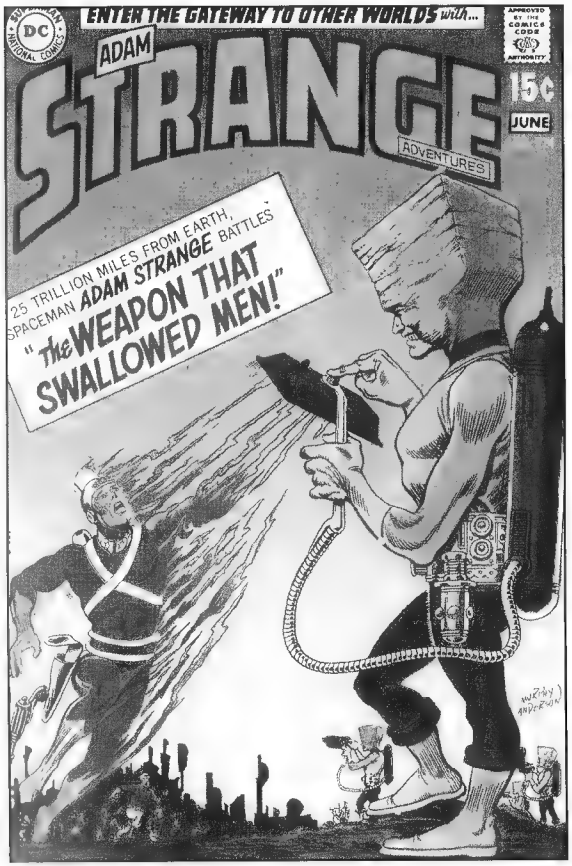
Anderson: Well, it wasn't a conscious change. To me it was just an evolutionary thing as I sharpened my skills. I think I became a better draftsman and so forth and that was reflected in the artwork.

creative spark for Adam Strange was an updated John Carter of Mars.

Schwartz: Yes. I actually told Gardner that the Burroughs concept was always unique and novel to me. Why don't we just do another version of it? I think that the appeal of Adam coming back just after the problem was solved was unique. Gardner and I had a lot of fun trying to figure out strange locales for the Zeta beam to strike. In one instance, we may have made a slight mistake. In doing research, I found out the Zeta beam coming in from Alpha Centauri, from the planet Rann that is, couldn't come below the equator. I think I did one in Miami Beach.

Anderson: I would think that's close enough to the equator to—

Schwartz: No, it's not that close. A miss is as good as a mile.



Strange Adventures #224 (Jun 1970); Murphy redid the original cover for a wonderful over-the-top rendition of this tough moment for Adam Strange.

CBM: I always thought Adam Strange's outfit resembled Captain Comet's uniform. Maybe it's the similar color scheme.

Anderson: I'm sure I was just trying to come up with something that looked science fictiony. But Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, Captain Comet, they were all influences. I didn't select colors or anything. Just the stripes, and the harness, and the headgear. The headgear is the way I laid it out the first time. I have the letter, Julie, that you wrote me that you couldn't use it. (Laughs)

Schwartz: Did I say why?

Anderson: We couldn't work out the layout to suit you. You know, it was an angle showing a pendulum swinging. You were dissatisfied with the way it was coming out. I forget just what your reasoning was. I had thought I'd licked it.

Schwartz: My theory is that if you look at an illustration and you don't understand immediately what's happening, change it.

Anderson: Yeah, you're right. I mean, it's not your job to know what's wrong with it, but that it doesn't work.

CBM: How did you get back on Adam Strange?

Anderson: After *Buck Rogers* fizzled again. This time it was not just on a money level, but it was more a personality thing. I gave up the strip again. By that time, I had not only a beautiful wife, but also two beautiful young ladies for daughters, and I had to provide for them. I had given up my job with my father to take on *Buck Rogers* again, and my brother had taken over in my place. So at that point I had to do something. So we decided to move back to the New York area. The only thing Julie had available was inking, with the promise that he would try to get me penciling.

So that's what I did. I inked The Flash for him over Carmine—one of the early Flashes. And did some covers. And he liked the combination. Then he had me inking Gil Kane. When he started The Atom, I inked that. That was not something I wanted to do. But let's face it, I'd make more money inking, and I didn't have to do much thinking on it. Most of that was already done for me. I just inked. Then I guess they just liked the look I could give them, the house look, or whatever they were looking for. But I kept bugging Julie. He gave me what he could. He gave me the "Atomic Knights." Then a little later, *Hawkman* was open. I did the tryout issues.

CBM: Joe Kubert launched that strip. It was very unusual for a Julie Schwartz feature to change artists in those days. How did that happen?

Anderson: I think it was a combination of things. But I think Joe really wanted to continue on the feature but thought it was impossible with the workload he had with

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Bob Kanigher. "Sgt. Rock" was a very important feature then. But also the other books and the other characters he was working on. So I think some decision was made that Joe was more valuable doing the war stuff than the super-hero type of thing. It's too bad because I think Joe had an affinity for Hawkman.

CBM: Back to Adam Strange, Murphy Anderson inking Carmine Infantino was a strange pairing.

Anderson: Well, our approach was different. Carmine's stuff, while he's a very, very good storyteller, he tends to draw abstractly. If he needs a hand or foot bent in the way it can't really go, for compositional purposes, he will do it. If he needs a face with abstract blacks on it, he'll draw it like that. It was difficult in the beginning, because I had a tendency to try to make it all work. I'm very realistically inclined, I guess, to draw things that really could be. I learned after a while that I just had to go with Carmine on certain things where it would just destroy the composition, or

P.S.
THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE MONTHLY
THERE, SIRE, JUST BEYOND THAT MOUNTAIN... LIES FORT ROCKY!
AND THE U.S. ARMY SUSPECTS NOTHING!
MR. MICRO-SHIELDS GOT US ALL SAFELY PAST THEIR DETECTORS!
ORDER THE ATTACK... NOW!
ALERT HQ... PRONTO!
New! For Weapons Cleaner, Lube, Preservative

P.S. Magazine #336 (Nov 1980) The "Galaxian Attack Dogs" will wreak havoc unless the Army gets its "P.M." (preventative maintenance) act together!—another great Anderson cover!

Murphy Anderson on Science Fiction Art continued

Ringgenberg: It seemed like you were employing a finer line as you went on into the sixties, seventies and eighties.

Anderson: Oh, gee, I don't really think so, but I can't be that objective about my own work. There was no conscious effort on my part other than to just sharpen my skills as a storyteller and as a draftsman.

Ringgenberg: On the early work were you employing more brush in your inking?

Anderson: Initially I worked with a brush almost exclusively, you know, did pen work, of course, just to crosshatch and special effects. And then, in the sixties I was having difficulty getting my work out and I evolved a method that saved me some time, and that was to pencil with a darker pencil on plate finish. Now the plate finish you could erase the pencil line off without...I mean the pencil line didn't penetrate the paper so much as when you worked with a soft pencil, but that meant that brush lines would come off very easily, off the plate finish. So I started working with a pen. And I did most of the work, I used a very fine point pen and then I was able to erase and just put the big, solid areas of black in with a brush. Once in a while, just to prove to myself I could, that I hadn't lost my brush feeling I would take a job and ink the entire thing, like I remember doing one of Gil Kane's *Atoms*. I took a brush only and did the entire job, even ruled the lines in with a brush.

Ringgenberg: Sort of as a challenge to yourself?

Anderson: Yeah. I didn't want to lose that ability. And when I started to work for Will Eisner, oh, in the mid-to-latter part of the sixties I had to go back to brush because everything that he did was inked on vellum.

Ringgenberg: What were you doing for Eisner?

Anderson: I worked on *P.S. Magazine* as a staff artist doing illustrations. The articles involved animating equipment and doing serious illustrations as well as humorous illustration.

Ringgenberg: And how long did the position last?

Anderson: I'd say approximately two and half years.

Ringgenberg: Mr. Anderson, just in closing, I was wondering, who have been some of your favorite writers whose scripts you've worked on in the past and maybe give me a reason why you liked that person's work.

Anderson: Well, I must say I've always been blessed with good writers. I worked with Edmond Hamilton, Manly Wade Wellman, John Broome, Gardner Fox, of course. John

destroy the picture if I tried to clean it up—what I call make it more realistic. On Adam Strange it worked quite well.

CBM: You were really the odd couple.

Anderson: Generally the figures were in proportion. I didn't have that kind of the problem. There are some artists who don't draw well. They have their stuff all out of joint. There's no way you can fix it. But Carmine's stuff was in proportion. His storytelling was great. His compositions were good. And he had a real feeling for unusual architecture that was very designy, but worked very well. And then too, Carmine was really quite ahead of this time in the design of spaceships and that sort of thing. When I got busy with Hawkman and Atomic Knights, and I couldn't ink Carmine, Sid Greene was pressed into service. Sid had the same problems I had.

CBM: What was it like to work for Kanigher?

Anderson: Well, I had no difficulty with Bob. I know a lot of artists had their heads handed to them by Bob. I think it was a question of respect. Bob, if he felt you weren't trying to bamboozle him, or trying to avoid doing tough things, you got no static from him. Did you ever hear him say anything derogatory of me, or to me, Julie?

Schwartz: No comment. (Laughs) No. No. No. But Kanigher did badmouth a lot of people.

Anderson: Bob and I always hit it off very well.

CBM: Tell me about working with writers like John Broome and Gardner Fox?

Anderson: I must say that I've always enjoyed John Broome's stories. I can't quite put my finger on why.

Schwartz: He was good. Professional. He wrote for *Amazing*.

Anderson: Yeah. I liked his science fiction. I liked his approach. The stories were just always good. I never had a script of his that was a problem. I liked Gardner's stuff. But it was on a different level. And Edmond Hamilton. I don't recall the scripts that much, but I always liked working on his subject matter. I'd never met Hamilton. I didn't meet Manly Wade Wellman for many years, either.

CBM: What did you work with Wellman on?

Anderson: *The Phantom Stranger*.

Schwartz: I'm trying to recall, did he write the Phantom Stranger origin?

Anderson: Well, he wrote some. But, you know when Carmine was sick, I did several.

Schwartz: One day, Whit Ellsworth called me and said, "We'd like to put out a weird mystery book." I said, "Fine." He said, "I have a title for you. I'm adapting it from an old Mark Twain story called 'The Mysterious Stranger.' But we're calling it 'The Phantom Stranger.' But you can do anything you want with it." It must have been done by Manly Wellman, who of course did many, many stories for *Weird Tales*. Or Gardner Fox.

Anderson: I know Manly did some of those scripts.

JOE'S Dope Sheet
On you let your diesel depend:
Take care that its cooking you 'tend.
And give it clean air.
And have never a care—
You'll be your engine's best friend
HAVE SOME MORE PM, OL' BUDDY!
PM
ELIXIR of PM
USE AS FREQUENTLY AS REQUIRED
THANKS PAL!
WE HAVE THE WORLD'S BEST EQUIPMENT ... Take care of it
IF YOU WANT TO DISPLAY THIS CENTERPIECE ON YOUR BULLETIN BOARD, OPEN STAPLES, LIFT IT OUT AND PIN IT UP.

This "center-spread" from **P.S. Magazine** features Murph's resident P.M. "poster-girl" Connie—amply reinforcing the bottom banner's claim of "the world's best equipment!"

CBM: Around 1960-'61, you became Julie's main cover artist.

Anderson: Well, if you look you'll see he had many artists.

Schwartz: In those days, I was probably putting out six books a month. I could hardly ask anyone to be my main cover artist. Whoever was available, did the cover.

Anderson: Well, I did most of your *Strange Adventures* covers.

CBM: What about this issue, *Strange Adventures* #138, with the brontosaur skeleton coming to life?

Anderson: That's mine.

Schwartz: I think I may have provided you with a swipe of the skeleton.

Anderson: That's right from the Museum of Natural History. I'm not sure that you did, or I went out there. I remember working from a picture.

CBM: Did you like doing the DC concept covers, Murphy?

Anderson: Yeah. Once in a while, when everything clicked, they were beautiful to do. But very often it was a strain for Julie and me. They used to take all afternoon. But I liked doing covers as far as that's concerned.

CBM: In 1964, Julie dropped the science-fiction titles and took over Batman. What happened to you at that that point?

Anderson: Well, in '65 I went to work for Will Eisner.

Schwartz: Didn't you ink the Carmine Infantino Batman stories?

Anderson: Not stories. I never did a Batman story with Carmine. But I did a lot of Batman covers for you, with Carmine. I was busy running around as a sort of goodwill ambassador for DC, working for all these toy companies during the Batman craze. Some licensee would call for an artist to draw Batman, they usually sent me on it.

CBM: How was working with Will Eisner on *P.S. Magazine*?

Anderson: What can I say about Will Eisner? He was a real pleasure to work with. The man was true to his word. Anything he told me he would do, he did. My problems, when I finally left Will, were not with him personally.

Schwartz: Did you ever work with him on *The Spirit*?

Anderson: No. We talked about it, but we never really did anything.

CBM: I think your styles would be very compatible.

Anderson: Oh, yes. I inked a lot of Will's stuff on *P.S. Magazine*. Of course, the problem you have is the same problem you have any time a guy inks another person's work. Since Will had the final responsibility for what we did, he would sometimes come back and second-guess me a little bit on character faces and that sort of thing. You know, maybe fix an eye or a nose if he thought it wasn't quite right. But other than that, no. He was very good about letting you do your own thing. He was very free with compliments, too. If he felt the piece was good, he didn't mind telling you. A lot of people in that position don't like to spread the praise too much, because it comes back with someone wanting a raise. But Will was a very fair man, and I learned quite a bit working with him. Even though that was very late in my career. It would have been much better for me to have worked with him when I started in the business than later.

Murphy Anderson on Science Fiction Art continued

Broome was quite a good writer and he wrote a lot of stuff for Julie, but he was never able to match Gardner in production. His stuff showed a lot more contemplation and he worked very hard to edit copy down to small balloon size and so forth. I mean to edit it down to where you didn't have so much verbiage, and still say what you wanted it to say and a lot of writers I think just write what pops into their heads, you know. That doesn't mean it's not good, but it's sort of like writing poetry if you're just going to edit it down to its just bare essentials.

Ringgenberg: So, you liked Broome's work?

Anderson: Oh, yes, very much. And Denny O'Neill was another favorite.

Ringgenberg: What about other artists you worked with? Were there any pencilers you liked more than others?

Anderson: Well, I guess Curt Swan was perhaps the easiest all-around one I was in tune with.

Ringgenberg: What did you like best about Curt's work?

Anderson: Well, it's just that he puts everything in, you know, he doesn't get hurried or anything. Everything's done at a certain pace and it's very conscientiously done. And that seems to be the way that I like to work, too. Other artists are more stylized and sometimes I'm not as in tune with them as I am with someone that draws very realistically, like I think Curt does.

Ringgenberg: How did you like inking Gil Kane's work?

Anderson: Well, that was very easy because Gil was basically a realistic artist and only in recent years he went, you know, a little more for the Kirby kind of thing, but still basically very straight.

Ringgenberg: Looking back on your whole career, were there any jobs or characters that you had a particular fondness for?

Anderson: Well, my favorite character in all the comics that I've worked on or read over the years would have to be Buck Rogers. That's partly because I grew up on Buck. Maybe when I was eight or nine years old I became aware of the strip, and it was a dream come true when I worked on the feature.

CBM: You took over *P.S.* after Eisner, didn't you?

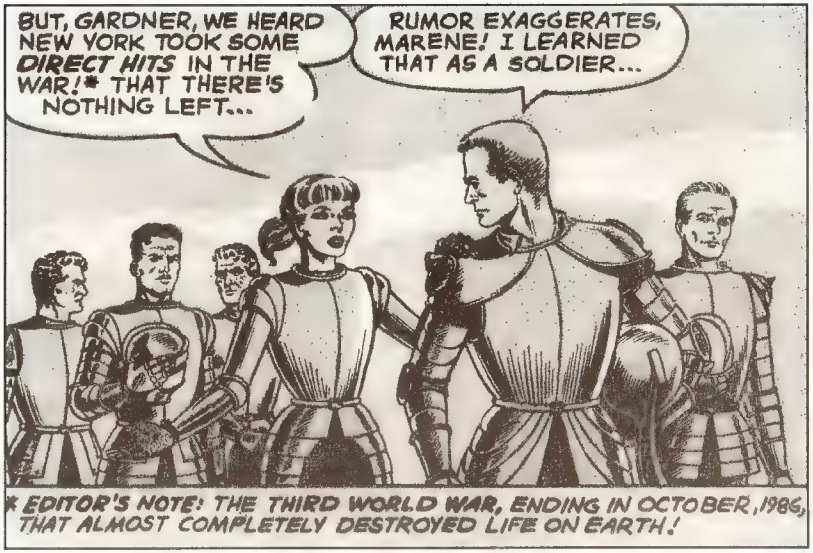
Anderson: Basically, I have my own company. I formed the company to make a bid for *P.S. Magazine*. Then I performed on the *P.S.* contract for a little over ten years, 111 issues as it worked out. We wound up with the capability of doing color separations, with the facilities and the know-how. When I got off the *P.S.* contract, I decided this was something I could build for my son and my wife and others, if anything happens to me. So they would have something to fall back on.

CBM: Looking back over your long career, Murphy, what was your happiest experience?

Anderson: The thing I found most gratifying over the years was working on *P.S. Magazine*.

Schwartz: This is turning out to be a long interview. Maybe you should have paid for the lunch. That goes on the record! (Laughs)

CBM: Thank you, gentlemen!


BUT, GARDNER, WE HEARD NEW YORK TOOK SOME DIRECT HITS IN THE WAR!* THAT THERE'S NOTHING LEFT...
RUMOR EXAGGERATES, MARENE! I LEARNED THAT AS A SOLDIER...
* EDITOR'S NOTE: THE THIRD WORLD WAR, ENDING IN OCTOBER, 1986, THAT ALMOST COMPLETELY DESTROYED LIFE ON EARTH!

Post-apocalyptic literature was not the staple it is now when Schwartz/Broome/Anderson created The Atomic Knights; from "The Cavemen of New York, **Strange Adventures** #123 (Jan 1961), immediately preceding "The Lost City of Los Angeles" in #126.

ART© DC COMICS INC.

"The Atomic Knights": Murphy (with the tie) and Julie Schwartz flank the late and much-missed superscribe John Broome at the 1999 San Diego Comic Con.

COLOR GALLERY

Issue 252
P.S.
1973 Series
November
THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE MONTHLY
HALP! ALL BECAUSE ONE LI'L MWO WASN'T APPLIED, THIS IS HAPPENIN'...?
WHETHER IT'S TODAY'S OR TOMORROW'S ARMY, SOLDIER-- YOU GOTTA KEEP YOUR EQUIPMENT READY!
MURPHY ANDERSON
SEE PAGE 21

P.S. Magazine was published for the US Army as a monthly update to the preventative maintenance catalogs used for keeping machines and equipment in good running order. Constantly redoing the catalogs themselves would have been much more cumbersome, so these little add-ons were post scripts, hence the name **P.S.** Will Eisner had the original production contract and hired Murphy Anderson in the mid-1960s. Murphy kept doing the mag, taking over the contract after Eisner. The many science fiction covers he drew for **P.S.** are classics in his best **Strange Adventures** mode. Here is a gallery of these exquisite SF gems.

Issue 275
P.S.
October
1975
THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE MONTHLY
HEY, WHAT'S GOIN' ON UP THERE?
YOU'RE HOLDIN' UP TH' CONVOY!
I DUNNO WHAT'S BUGGIN' HIM, SARGE!
I FUELED HIM UP GOOD BEFORE WE MOVED OUT!
CAMP PICTROWN -SAM-
MURPHY ANDERSON
GLURG!
?
DID YOU PULL A BEFORE OPERATIONS CHECK?
AND WHEN WAS TH' LAST TIME YOU PERFORMED ANY PM ON HIM?

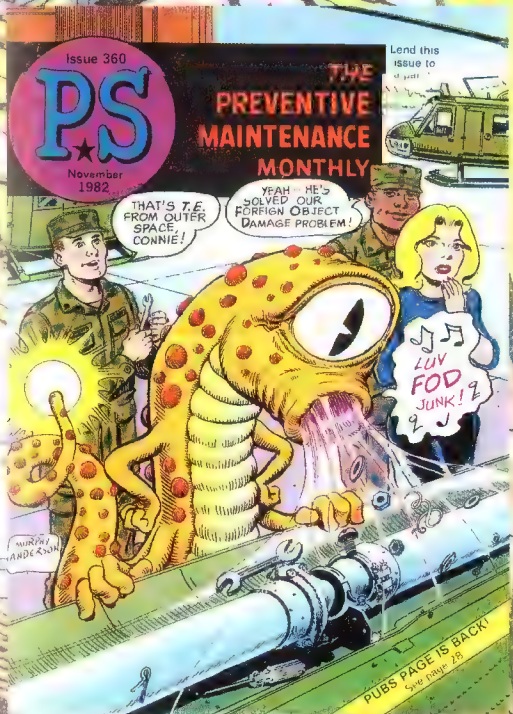
COLOR GALLERY

PS
THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE MONTHLY
November 1975
HEY SAM -- WE'RE BEING INVADED!! GET HQ ON THE RADIO!
C-CAN'T--IT AIN'T WORKIN"
THEN GET US OUTTA HERE!
SOB! CAN'T! TH' ¼-TON'S STALLED OUT--AND WON'T START UP AGAIN!
IF ONLY I'D CHECKED 'ER OUT 'FORE WE LEFT!..
MURPHY ANDERSON
see Pages 29-36

Issue 306
PS
THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE MONTHLY
May 1978
TAKE US TO YOUR LEADER..
WE MUST INFORM HIM OF THE ATROCIOUS WAY IN WHICH YOU STOW YOUR ELECTRONIC GEAR!

Issue 318
PS
THE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE MONTHLY
May 1979
STARSHIP IN POSITION, SIRE!! THE OPTIMUM MOMENT FOR "OPERATION EARTH STRIKE" IS NOW...
BUT...
INEXPLICABLY, NONE OF OUR ATTACK FORCE IS OPERABLE...
GEAR COMPONENTS ARE RUSTED, SHORTED-OUT OR FOGGED-UP!!
WATER DAMAGE!!*
GET THAT @☆!!* EARTH "MIND-SLAVE" SPEC KLUTZ, UP HERE...
IMMEDIATELY!
* See Page 29

COLOR GALLERY

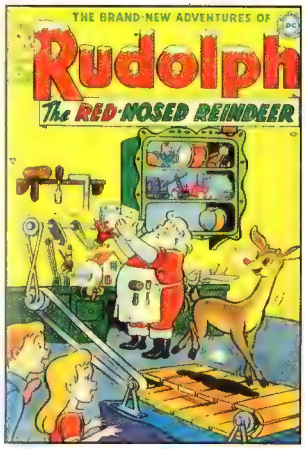


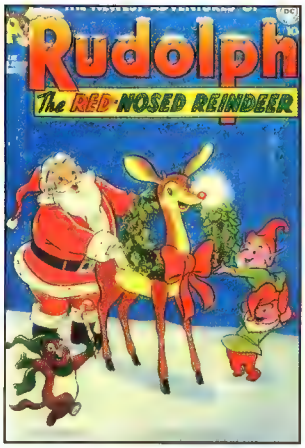
COLOR GALLERY

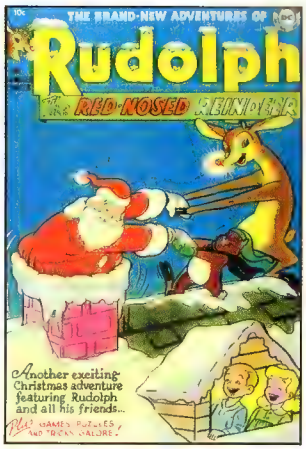
CHARLOTTE HEROES CONVENTION NC
HEROES LEAGUE AMERICA
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JUN.
I'VE GOT THIS GAME RIGGED SO THAT EVERY-TIME THOR MAKES A MOVE, A MEMBER OF THE HEROES LEAGUE DISAPPEARS FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH!
A STAR-STUDDED DEALER'S DREAM--
WORLD OF NO RETURNS
MURPHY ANDERSON 2001

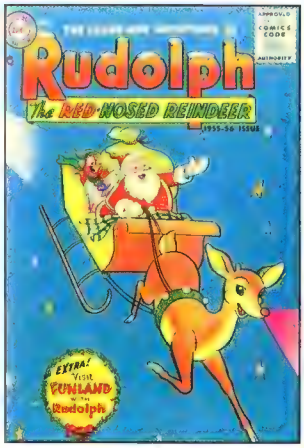
Heroes League America #1 (2001) Murphy's re-creation of the **Justice League of America** #1 cover—substituting Marvel characters—was a superb treat featured on that year's North Carolina Heroes Con program book.

COLOR GALLERY





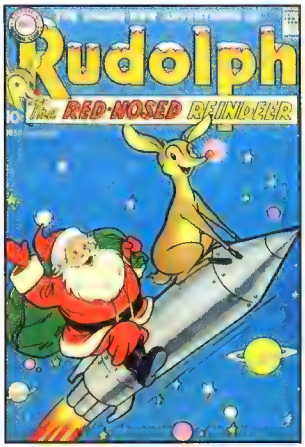


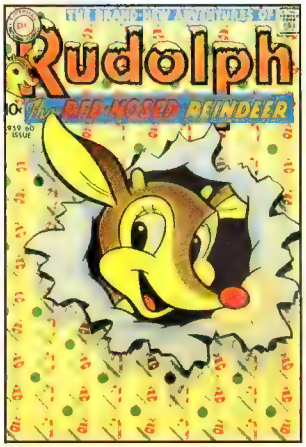


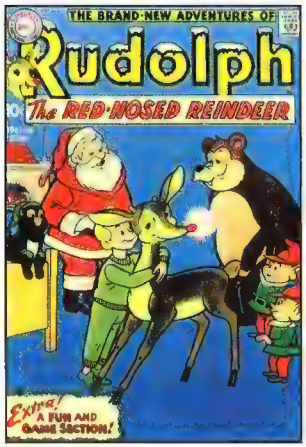
Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, back cover 1952, 1954, 1955-56, 1956-57, 1957-58

COVERS © DC COMICS

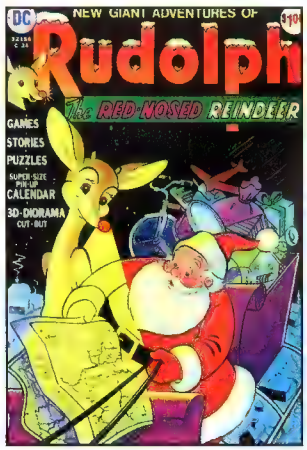
COLOR GALLERY

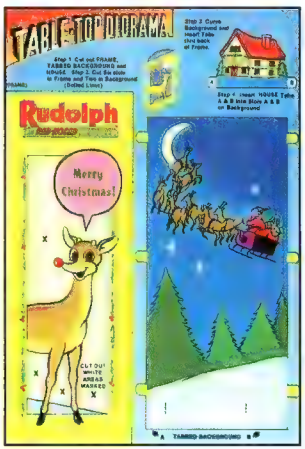






GIANT ANNUAL
Rudolph
The RED-NOSED REINDEER
IN EXCITING FUN-FILLED ADVENTURES!!
See Rudolph CHASED BY A TORNADO IN A RUNAWAY BALLOON!
See Rudolph AS HE MATCHES NOSES WITH THE POLAR BEAR!
See Rudolph AS HE BRAVELY BATTLES THE KING'S GUARDS!
See Rudolph TRAPPED IN A CAGE WITH LION

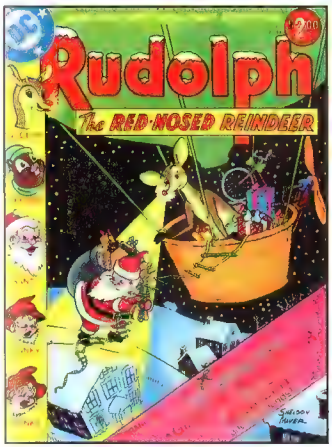


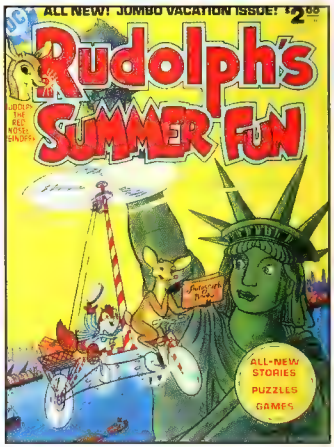


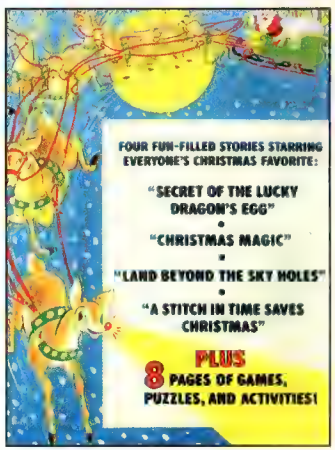
Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer 1958-59, 1959-60, 1960-61, 1961-62, back cover 1961-62, 1962-63 Annual, 1972 Christmas ("C-20," first Treasury-sized), 1973 Christmas (C-24), back cover C-24

COVERS © DC COMICS

COLOR GALLERY






FOUR FUN-FILLED STORIES STARRING EVERYONE'S CHRISTMAS FAVORITE:
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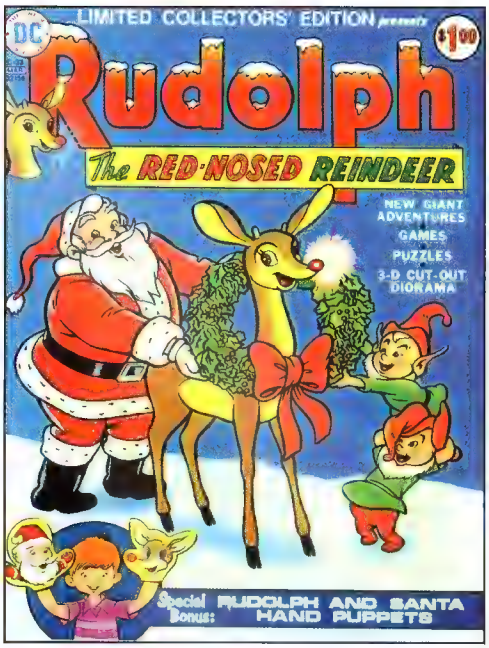
"CHRISTMAS MAGIC"
"LAND BEYOND THE SKY HOLES"
"A STITCH IN TIME SAVES CHRISTMAS"
PLUS
8 PAGES OF GAMES, PUZZLES, AND ACTIVITIES!

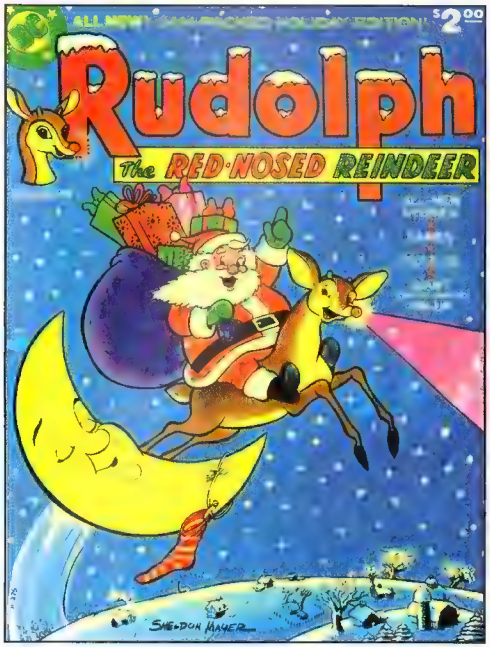
Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Limited Collectors' Edition C-33 (1974) back cover, Limited Collectors' Edition C-42 (Feb/Mar 76) back cover, All New Collectors' Edition C-53 (1978) back cover (see these three issues' front covers on next page), 1976 Christmas Issue (C-50 on cover), back cover C-50, All New Collectors' Edition C-60 (Sum 1978), back cover C-60; **Best of DC** #4 (1980, digest size), back cover **Best of DC** #4

COLOR GALLERY

CHRISTMAS IS COMING--
with presents, Santa Claus and
Rudolph
The RED-NOSED REINDEER
THAT'S RIGHT--EVERYONE'S FAVORITE REINDEER IS BACK WITH HIS BREATHIEST BAG OF SURPRISES YET--including
3 BRAND-NEW STORIES!
(20" X 26")
Season's Greetings
8 PAGES OF PUZZLES AND GAMES!!
PLUS!
THE BIGGEST GLOSSY FULL-COLOR PIN-UP POSTER EVER SEEN IN ANY COMIC MAGAZINE!



DC House Ad for C-50 (1976) showing pull-out poster (ad shows poster without DC seal on Santa's chest—see article for seal), **Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer** Limited Collectors' Edition C-33 (1974), Limited Collectors' Edition C-42 (Feb/Mar 76), All New Collectors' Edition C-53 (1978)



AD & COVERS © DC COMICS

Steve Geppi sells "Pay Copy" of Marvel Comics #1 to Jay Parrino for $350,000

Diamond Comic Distributors President and CEO congratulates Bill Hughes of Jay Parrino's The Mint on the acquisition of the "Pay Copy" of **Marvel Comics** #1.

Diamond Comic Distributors President and Chief Executive Officer Steve Geppi has announced he sold the celebrated "Pay Copy" of *Marvel Comics* #1 to Jay Parrino's The Mint for a record $350,000. This marks the record amount ever paid for a comic and bests the previous record price of $278,190 paid last year for a copy of *Detective Comics* #27.

"This landmark sale reflects the incredible importance of the "Pay Copy" of *Marvel Comics* #1 in the history of comic character collectibles," Geppi said.

The deal was negotiated by John K. Snyder, Jr., President of Diamond International Galleries and Bill Hughes and Rob Hughes for Jay Parrino's The Mint.

This price reflects a record $350,000 (or 2x *Guide*) for *Marvel Comics* #1, based on values listed in the thirty-first edition of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. Pedigreed copies of key titles and issues such as these have traditionally brought multiples of *Guide*.

The comic was graded and encapsulated by the independent grading firm of Comics Guaranty, LLC (CGC). It was certified at 9.0, or Very Fine to Near Mint.

"This is a beautiful book. The registration on the pages of this copy of *Marvel Comics* #1 are phenomenal. We're all in agreement that it's one of the finest known copies. It is a great piece of history and it was fantastic to be able to see and grade it," said Steve Borock, Primary Grader for CGC.

Its historical merit alone defines any copy of *Marvel Comics* #1 as special. It features the origin of the Sub-Mariner, the introduction of the Human Torch, the comic book first appearance of Ka-Zar, as well as the first appearances of The Angel, The Masked Rider, and the Jungle Terror. It is the first Marvel comic!

Marvel Comics became *Marvel Mystery Comics* with issue #2. It was a success for publisher Martin Goodman and is today a highly sought after prize that demands attention in virtually any grade.

Most known copies of *Marvel Comics* #1 were misprinted so that the bottom of the artwork on some of the pages was trimmed off, with extra white space being left at the top. This is not the case, though, with the "Pay Copy." Its crisp white pages alone would make this copy significant, but the notations on the pages indicate dates, amounts and check numbers regarding payments to the creators of each piece.

The "Pay Copy" earned its name because it came from the files of Funnies, Inc. and features hand written notations of the payments to Sub-Mariner creator Bill Everett and other contributors.

Jay Parrino's The Mint also acquired the "Pay Copy" of *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* from Geppi for a record amount.

Background on *Marvel Comics #1*

Early in 1939, Lloyd Jacquet, who had been the first editor of *New Fun* and subsequently an editor for Centaur Publishing, left to form his own company, Funnies, Inc. His new studio was formed with the goal of packaging comics for other publishers. With freelance talent that included Mickey Spillane and Carl Burgos, and a very small staff comprised of Jacquet, Bill Everett and two others, they set up shop and went to work looking for clients. A short while later, Frank Torpey, their sales manager, convinced Martin Goodman, who published pulp magazines, to give comics a try.

The staffers of Funnies, Inc. provided *Marvel Comics* #1 with a potpourri of super-heroes and other comic characters. Bill Everett's Sub-Mariner (who appeared first in *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly*) was one of the key features, as was Carl Burgos' Human Torch. Ka-Zar (by Ben Thompson) made the leap from Goodman's pulp magazines to the comics page, the Angel (by Paul Gustavson), the Masked Rider and the Jungle Terror also appeared. The Sub-Mariner, The Human Torch and The Angel became instant comic book stars, and Sub-Mariner and Human Torch were soon featured in the first comic book crossover with their constant battles. *Marvel Comics* #1 featured a cover by the noted pulp artist Frank R. Paul. As most enthusiasts know, Sub-Mariner, Human Torch and Ka-Zar have been mainstays in comics since and are frequently featured in publications from Marvel Comics, Timely's present day incarnation. Jacquet's arrangement with Goodman continued until late 1942 when Goodman hired away a large chunk of the Funnies, Inc. staff.

YET MORE FUN

In a **Comic Book Marketplace** exclusive, Bob Beerbohm has unearthed an essay written by legendary figure Lloyd Jacquet for **Newsdealer** magazine in 1957, about the birth of the **More Fun** title. This piece, introduced by Beerbohm, appears on page 63 of this issue.

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Price per: Item#	Size	Description	50	100	1000
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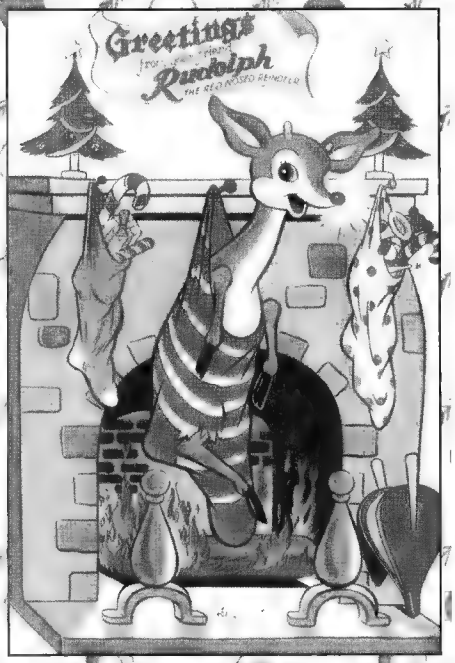


They used to laugh and call him names, but...

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

...had a shining publishing history!

by Dan Owens

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer may be second to Santa Claus himself as the most recognizable popular culture Christmas icon. Is there anyone out there who doesn't know the words to the popular Christmas song (probably the Burl Ives version) or who hasn't seen the Rankin/Bass TV Christmas special, many times? I know I have, and it was this love for the annual Christmas show that found its way into my comic collecting world.

Twentyone times between 1950 and 1980, DC comics published an "annual" foray into Christmas fantasy called *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. DC's *Rudolph* #1 was published during the Christmas season of 1950, and was the only 52-page issue. The inside front cover introduced us to the cast of characters, which would be largely stable throughout the series. They were J. Baddy Bear (simply known as Baddy Bear, and one of the main antagonists of Rudolph), Casper the Postman, Professor Owl, Blinky and Winky the elves, Mrs. Wildgoose, Jack and Judy, Santa, and Grover the Groundhog (Rudolph's main adventuring partner). The stories were whimsical fantasy, at times they were outright outrageous, but always timeless fun which stand up well today.

I was first introduced to Rudolph's comic adventures at the age of 11 during Christmas 1973, when a relative purchased for me what is commonly known as (I will explain this later) "*Limited Collectors' Edition* C-24." I vividly remember reading and loving this book. To this day it is an annual Christmas ritual at our house to bring out issues of *Rudolph* during the Christmas season. My wife Doreen, and our daughters Jennifer and Rebecca and myself read an issue or two of Rudolph's crazy antics out loud.

1950-1962

DC published *Rudolph* basically in two runs, one taking place from 1950-1962, and again from 1972-1980. The series was like no other series that DC published. That first 1950 issue was a departure from the DC style, and DC published this series with permission from Robert L. May, which fact appeared in each issue's indicia. (May created the Rudolph character in 1939.) The 1950 through 1962 issues

Back covers of (top) **Rudolph** 1954 issue and (bottom) 1951 issue, holiday motif used in this article is from the back cover of 1959-60 issue

COVERS © DC COMICS

were all book-length stories, with no ads. Each issue contained about eight pages of games and puzzles, and the back cover was usually a portrait or calendar.

The exception here is the 1962-63 issue. And what an exception it was! This 84-page book actually was an *annual*, which reprinted two earlier issues, and had one new story. A new story is in and of itself unique, as no other DC Annual from that period ever had a new story in it. This probably indicates that the issue was originally not meant to be an Annual, and the new story was prepared for a regular-sized issue. Interestingly enough, if the book had not been converted to an Annual, it would have been the only 12-cent cover issue of *Rudolph* published; all other issues were 10-cent issues. The 1962-63 Annual (the indicia reads: "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Annual 1962-'63 issue") also is the only *Rudolph* to ever contain an ad. This inside back cover is a house ad for two other Annuals, *Superman* Annual 6 and *Batman* Annual 4. One last note about the 1962-63 Annual, it is most likely the scarcest of all DC Annuals, difficult to find in any condition and it has been mislisted in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* for years as a regular issue.

1972-1980

DC didn't publish a Rudolph book again until 1972, this time pioneering a new format in comics, to be known as "Treasury-size" editions (10" x 13 1/2"). The first book was titled simply "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer 1972 Christmas issue" and has been referred to for years as *Limited Collectors' Edition* C-20. The issue's cover is a reprint of the back cover of the 1958-59 issue (a personal favorite of mine), the back cover reprints the art from the front cover of the 1956-57 issue, and it contains reprints of three issues from the 1950s. The next issue was published for the Christmas of 1973, and is listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* as *Limited Collectors' Edition* C-24, but in fact the indicia reads "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Christmas edition No. C-24." This issue was all reprinted stories as well, and the cover is a reprint of the great 1957-58 issue. The 1974-75 issue(C-33) broke the reprint mold. It has a new cover and a new story that begins the Sheldon Mayer run on the series. *Limited Collectors'* C-42 is an all new Sheldon Mayer issue, and Shelly's art style really stands out in this one. When I first read this issue, it reminded me of *Sugar and Spike*. The next issue, "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer 1976 Christmas Issue," has "C-50" on the cover. Again, this is listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* under *Limited Collectors' Edition*, but nowhere in the indicia or cover does it say *Limited Collectors' Edition*. This issue cost $2.00 and has a great poster insert of Santa and Rudolph; Santa has a DC emblem on his chest that says "Santa Reads DC Comics." The 1978 issue was part of the series *All-New Collectors' Edition*, and is number C-53. The last Treasury-sized issue was actually released during the summer of 1978, the only issue not released during the Christmas season. It's part of the *All-New Collectors' Edition* series and is number C-60, the cover logo says "Rudolph's Summer Fun," and contains nice a book-length Sheldon Mayer story that has Rudolph and cast travelling around the world.

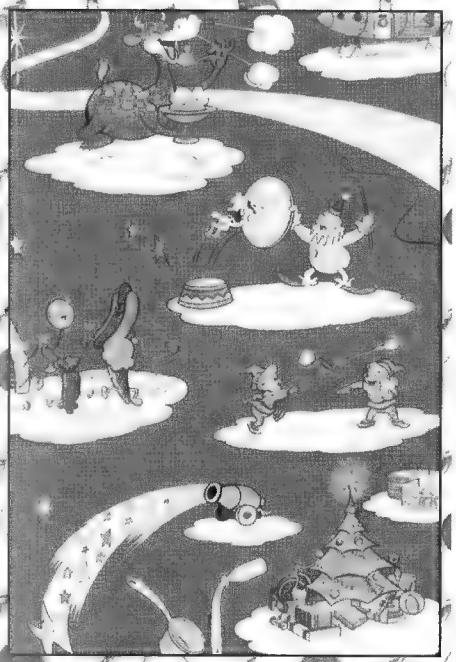
DC's last effort at Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer would come in yet another format, this time a digest. *The Best of DC* #4, dated March/April 1980, contained four Rudolph sto-

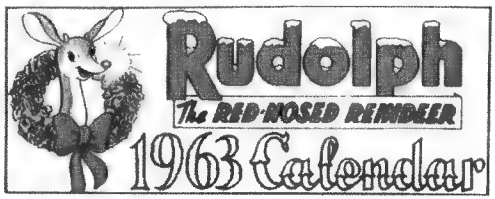
Portrait is from the back cover of the 1950 issue, Santa comin' in a whirlybird on the back cover of the 1953 issue

ries; two were reprints, and two were either inventory or new stories (since these digests were mostly reprints, it makes sense that they were unused inventory, probably from the next planned Treasury-size issue). All four stories were by Sheldon Mayer.

And that was the last DC-published *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, twenty-one great issues, in thirty-one years. The series stands alone in the DC universe; three different formats, Annual publication, several different titles, no ads, etc. The stories are as fun to read each year as when they were new. *Rudolph*s aren't very expensive, the priciest issue being the 1972 Christmas Issue at $250 in the current *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. Most are well under a hundred dollars in Near Mint, and only between $10-20 in Good (the most commonly found condition). I can honestly say in the years I have been pursuing *Rudolphs*, I have never seen a 1950 through 1963 issue in better than Fine.

So start a collecting trend in your house, grab your kids, and flop down in front of the fireplace with a great old issue of *Rudolph*, and as the song says, "You'll go down in history!"





On left, back covers of (top) 1958-59 issue, the author's favorite and originally considered for the front cover of **CBM**; and (bottom) a glimse of Rudolph cosmology on back cover of 1955-56 issue

Above, the calendar heading from the back cover of 1957-58 issue (also had handy list of 1958 holidays!), the same from the back cover of 1962-63 issue (also appeared on the back cover of 1956-57 issue)

Round portrait of Rudolph is from the back cover of the 1960-61 issue, and Santa's 'DC patch' from the 1976 issue's poster

RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER CHECKLIST

ISSUE	STORY	REPRINTED...	ARTIST
1950	No Title		No Credits*
1951	No Title (Rudolph Saves the Day)	...in 1972 Christmas	No Credits*
1952	No Title (Two Heads Are Better Than One)	...in 1973 Christmas C-24	No Credits*
1953	No Title (The King Who Outlawed Christmas)	...in 1972 Christmas	No Credits*
1954	No Title (Rudolph and Grover Join the Circus)	...in Annual 1962-63 and 1973 Christmas C-24	No Credits*
1955-56	No Title (Rudolph Meets the Sandman)	...in 1972 Christmas and Annual 1962-63	No Credits*
1956-57	No Title		No Credits*
1957-58	No Title		No Credits*
1958-59	No Title	...in Limited Collectors' Ed C-33	No Credits*
1959-60	No Title		No Credits*
1960-61	No Title		No Credits*
1961-62	No Title		No Credits*
Annual 1962-63	1st Story No Title	...from 1955-56 issue	No Credits*
	2nd Story No Title	...from 1954 issue	No Credits*
	3rd Story No Title (New)	...in 1973 Christmas C-24	No Credits*
1972 Christmas ("C-20")	1st Story "Rudolph Saves the Day"	...from 1951 issue	No Credits*
	2nd Story "Rudolph Meets the Sandman"	...from 1955-56 issue	No Credits*
	3rd Story "The King Who Outlawed Christmas"	...from 1953 issue	No Credits*
1973 Christmas C-24	1st Story "Uncle Bloogle Visits Rupolph"	...from Annual 1962-63	No Credits*
	2nd Story "Two Heads Are Better Than One"	...from 1952 issue	No Credits*
Ltd Collectors' Edition C-33 (1975)	1st Story "Christmas Won't Wait" (New)		Sheldon Mayer
	2nd Story No Title	...from 1958-59	Rube Grossman
Ltd Collectors' Edition C-42 (Feb-Mar 1976)	1st Story "Christmas By Computer"		Sheldon Mayer
	2nd Story "Meets Humperdink the Hunter and the Ding-A-Ling Bird"		No Credits*
1976 Christmas Issue (C-50 on cover)	1st Story "Christmas Magic"	...in Best of DC No. 4	Sheldon Mayer
	2nd Story "The Land Behind the Sky Holes"	...in Best of DC No. 4	Sheldon Mayer
	3rd Story "The Morning After"		Sheldon Mayer
All New Collectors' Edition C-53 (1978)	1st Story "Only Two Days To Christmas"		Sheldon Mayer
	2nd Story "Giant Problem"		Sheldon Mayer
All New Collectors' Edition C-60 (Summer 1978)	1st Story "The Open Road"		Sheldon Mayer
	2nd Story "Lady On Liberty Island"		Sheldon Mayer
	3rd Story "Homeward Bound...But..."		Sheldon Mayer
Best of DC No. 4 (1980)	1st Story "Christmas Magic"	...from 1976 Christmas	Sheldon Mayer
	2nd Story "The Land Behind the Sky Holes"	...from 1976 Christmas	Sheldon Mayer
	3rd Story "Will A Stitch In Time Save Christmas" (New)		Sheldon Mayer
	4th Story "Secret of the Lucky Dragon" (New)		Sheldon Mayer

*most stories that had no credits were drawn by Rube Grossman

Frank Frazetta

by Dave Winiewicz

© 2001

Everyone considers Frank Frazetta to be one of the world's great painters. This fact is clear and unquestioned. However, more attention needs to be paid to his pen-and-brush linework because, in my opinion (and I am not alone in this thought), Frazetta is the finest draftsman who has ever lived. Frazetta has far surpassed the greatest of those who preceded him, e.g. Daniel Vierge, Mariano Fortuny, Joseph Clement Coll, Alex Raymond, and Hal Foster. That is a group of distinguished illustrators with huge, well-deserved reputations. Frazetta, however, is in a class all by himself. Frazetta utilizes a varied approach to drawing depending on his ultimate end, be it sketchwork or finished illustration. There is no set pattern that he uses.

Frazetta's Fine Lines

Consider his sketchwork. Most of Frazetta's sketches are done simply for the joy of drawing. Sometimes, he will lightly draw lines in pencil and then ink over this. Often he will simply allow the pen to play and see where it leads him. Frazetta's line is really one of the wonders of the world and has never been matched. Consider the exceptional sketch of a fight scene with its loose lines and vibrant energy. Frazetta's line appears to sing and dance and play all over the page. This free-flowing doodle is really the visual armature for a more finished drawing. These lines are used as a dynamic reference map from which he will choose defining lines and patterns of movement.

ART © 2002 FRANK FRAZETTA

Now consider the sketch of the barbarian and female supplicant. This sketch is very finished, yet full of vitality and subtlety. Frazetta's linework is loose and seemingly spontaneous, yet he captures the subject in all its power and nuances. The soft lines and lighting of the girl (not to exclude the provocatively upturned breast and visually tantalizing nipple) are dynamically opposed to the rough, gritty hardness of the barbarian with his overwhelming rocklike girth and imperiously gesturing arm. The phallus-like scabbard is a typically inspired Frazetta "touch" that engages our imaginations and fue's speculation about the precise nature of this tableaux. What's going on here? Is the girl his mistress? A captive? An errant child who has been caught? Frazetta entertains us here with a virtuoso presentation of narrative drama, visual power, and subtle suggestiveness. I doubt if there is another artist who can blend these elements so seamlessly. Frazetta does this time and time again. In doing so, he brings us beyond the surface obviousness to an understanding of the deeper intention of the artist. These little efforts by Frazetta are little jewels of personal insight, technical mastery, and private delight.

ART © 2002 FRANK FRAZETTA

Frazetta reaches his highest creative pinnacle with the Canaveral Press drawings from 1962-1965. Frank was commissioned to illustrate several books by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Two books were published: *Tarzan at the Earth's Core* (1962) and *Tarzan and the Castaways* (1965). Other books were planned but never published, although an edition of *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* by Richard Lupoff was published in 1965 with several Frazetta drawings. Frazetta executed a total of 27 full drawings and five small spot illustrations for this Canaveral Press series. Each drawing is a polished piece of highly sophisticated perfection. Frazetta was showing the world what he could do at a time when he wanted to establish a name for himself. Each drawing is a little miracle of power and refinement. The technique Frazetta employed in all these drawings is akin to the sumi-e inkwash paintings of the Japanese. These are drawings with a carefully controlled tonal range that varies from solid black to the lightest of water-thinned ink tones. Frank does this to control the level of contrast in the designs and to control carefully what the eye sees first and last. The result is pieces with sustained intellectual interest. Each drawing easily warrants its own essay. Let me comment on just one, namely the great fight scene between David Innes and Jubal the Ugly One.

What is obvious at first glance is the incredible energy and dynamism exploding from the composition. The ferocious power of the hero's punch has lifted the huge bulk of Jubal right off his feet. Jubal's horrific head is turned, his arms flail in an attempt to gain balance, and rocks fly from his dislodged footing. Provocatively posed in the foreground is the about-to-be-rescued heroine. Her wild hair indicates that her attention has just been violently turned from Jubal to David Innes. Everything is in motion; nothing is static. The eye and mind are immediately captured by this visual whirlwind. The intricately circulating rhythm of arms and hair and clothing is simply a delight. Frazetta's line contains no hesitations; it is swift and forceful. Every dip of the brush flows with passion and creative exuberance.

Someone might say that this is just a conventional, stereotypical scene of hero, monster, and girl that has been seen thousands of times before. This scene is a visual cliché that has been repeatedly drawn and painted. This is obviously true, however, stereotypes are necessary components in constructing any type of myth. Without stereotypes and visual tropes communication becomes impossible. The key is in how these elements are handled. Consider the subtle nuances hidden in this drawing.

Firstly, the hero is presented rather small in stature. A multitude of softly drawn lines define his belly and suggest a bit of muscle. Frazetta's ability to suggest textures through ink is unrivalled. The rest of David Innes is virtually all gesture. The uncoiling of Innes results in the recoiling of Jubal; a perfect, seemless interplay of forms in motion. Jubal's bulk looms over the scene and dominates the visual space; his heavily-muscled back and legs are a feast for the eye and provide a unique surface rhythm for the mind to play with. The precisely-weighted lines are carefully placed to achieve maximum impact. However, this extremely formidable foe has just been vanquished by a man. This is a man that we can identify with: lean, not overly large, yet filled with heroic rage and intensity. Human emotion has been perfectly translated into gesture. Frazetta has infused this scene with an important element of believability and reality. This heightens the engagement of the mind with the subject matter. His lines are vivacious and mercurial, yet carefully focused. Frazetta prefers expressiveness over lifeless perfection, and thus carefully prunes his compositions of anything superfluous.

After the initial visual shock of this masterful confrontation, the eye is drawn to the sprawling, seductive form of Dian the Beautiful in the foreground. Once again, Frazetta entertains us with the sensuous magic of his drawing, but adds little touches that define his greatness as a creative master. We've already commented on the swinging movement of the hair that defines her place in the story. Her entire figure emerges from the foreground shadow as if a rare dream is materializing in front of our amazed eyes. She also provides a soft counterpoint to the heavy rockwork to her right. Note how Frank deepens the shadows of the rocks from top to bottom. These rocks anchor the design and prevent it from turning into a visual chaos. The heroine's leg not only provides a direct compositional line that leads the eye back into the composition, but it enchants the connoisseur along the way. The right side of the leg is defined by the background; there is no explicitly drawn line. This is virtuosity at its peak and, once again, adds to the reality of the scene. The deliciously-rounded buttocks are, of course, a Frazetta trademark. Once again, Frank indicates the stress and emotion present in the girl by having her buttocks slightly clenched. Notice the slightly-protruding muscle on the right side where upper thigh and buttock join. The soft rendering in those areas is perfection itself. That disarming lightness of touch provides a counterpoint to the heaviness of the overall subject matter. Another little Frazetta "touch" is the soft lighting seen in the underside of the left buttock. This is an almost lecherous element that invites the eye in to a most private area. Passion, violence, and sex are close relations; Frazetta recognizes that quite clearly. Once again, we see Frazetta taking a scene of great power and, by infusing it with his own unique creative imagination and taste, transforms it into a world-class piece of *art*. The great Canaveral Plates have never been matched, and never will be. They are a legacy for the world and an ongoing inspiration and challenge to generations of artists.

The later drawings of Frazetta, referring to the Doubleday series of books in the 1970s and the Middle Earth portfolio pieces, represent a different style and approach. At this stage, Frazetta is drawing as a painter, not as a draftsman. Intricate schemes of rendering are replaced by large placements of wash tone. This requires a separate essay to do it justice. This period is wonderful in its own way, but it does not come near the special magic of the Canaveral years.

Owning a nice sketch or drawing by Frazetta is just as satisfying as owning a major painting. Why? From the simplest sketch to the most major oil everything appears to be alive. Frazetta's soul *lives* in his art and the magic of art is that we can share in his wondrous gift. His art enhances our lives and, as with all great, enduring art, it makes the world a richer, more satisfying, place.

Inspiration Central

All American Monkey Boy: Frank Cho on His Influences

by Bill Baker

Whether it's in the panels of his daily comic strip Liberty Meadows, *or in the pages of art books such as* IS Art: The Art of Insight Studios *and* Frank Cho: Illustrator, *Frank Cho's work has struck a chord with fans. And not just fans of new material. Plenty of established masters, like his friend Al Williamson, consider Cho to be a talent almost from the old school.*

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE: Frank, who are some of the artists that influenced and inspired you?

FRANK CHO: Al Williamson, Roy Krenkel, Frank Frazetta, Norman Rockwell, Don Newton, Mark Shultz, Adam Hughes, John Singer Sargent. A lot of the classically trained guys and golden age illustrators like N.C. Wyeth, Franklin Booth, and Joseph Clement Coll, etc.

CBM: Well, let's start with Wyeth; what about his work just grabbed you, and made you want to pick up a brush?

CHO: I thought he and Frank Frazetta were cut from the same cloth. They have such dynamic power to their work, which is just mind blowing. I'd first discovered Frazetta at age 12. When you're at that age, anything Frazetta did just blew you away. And I had the same feeling for Wyeth when I first discovered him.

Franklin Booth is another tremendous artist from the past. Without him, there would be no Berni Wrightson's *Frankenstein*. I was stunned when I first saw Wrightson's *Frankenstein* as a kid. [When] I saw Franklin Booth's illustrations as an adult it had the same effect as Wrightson's *Frankenstein* did. I've never seen anyone who can capture the feeling of atmosphere and grandness with just a pen and ink. To this day, I have never seen any artist duplicate what Booth has done.

I started discovering a lot of cartoonists and artists in fifth grade, and then just developed my tastes over time. [Later,] I had the good fortune of meeting Mark Wheatley, who opened the doors to many great golden age illustrators for me. As I discovered one artist, I found out who their influences were, and then [I'd] keep branching off, keep going and discovering all these other great artists.

My first great influence was Norman Rockwell, to be honest with you. I first discovered Rockwell—I came over to America when I was six years old—back in '78, around the time Norman Rockwell passed away, and then they were doing all these retrospectives on Rockwell, and Rockwell's paintings were posted all over the place. One of my first recollections of a Rockwell painting was [his] "Saying Grace" piece. It's the painting with the old lady and her grandson at a train station, or a busy cafe, saying Grace in the middle of this crazy, hectic modern world. So Norman Rockwell was the first one to steer me to this great world of art and illustrations.

CBM: Who did you discover after Rockwell?

CHO: Then I basically went the comic book route, like all kids do. Well, kids back then, anyway. [Laughter] Actually, one of the very first comic books that stood out in my mind was *Detective Comics* #509 by Don Newton, and inked by Dan Adkins. It was the one with Batman versus Catman, where Catman kidnapped Catwoman. And that was such a beautiful comic book art-wise. I discovered Batman roughly around the same time when Don Newton passed away, so I just missed him. This copy of #509 was several years old when I came upon it. I found it at the bottom of the comic book pile in the local library and I just remember being so impressed by Don Newton's incredible drawing. It was just so beautiful; that's the word for it.

And then, from Don Newton, I discovered all these other artists, like Frank Frazetta. Frazetta led to Al Williamson and Roy Krenkel. Al Williamson led to Mark Shultz. And then, Adam Hughes. I'm a huge fan of Mark Schultz and Adam Hughes. These two guys are what great comic artists should be today.

CBM: Well, what about Frazetta caught your attention?

CHO: The sheer drama. Frazetta caught me at the right age, when I was about 12 years old—just the sheer power of it all. Frazetta's paintings would just punch you right in the gut, ya know? Just knock you on your can type of art. Just gorgeous. When you're at that age you want something

exciting, and his paintings and illustrations definitely were exciting. Full of moxie.

CBM: Well, what about his portrayal of women?

CHO: Yeah. Frazetta draws what women should look like. Not like this skinny heroin addict looking models with a body of a 12-year-old boy that you see in fashion magazines. Yuck! Give me women with some meat on their bones.

Actually, though, women-wise it was Linda Carter on the 1970's *Wonder Woman* TV show that basically etched the image in my brain of what the perfect woman should be for me. That statuesque brunette with that very curvaceous outline. If you [like what you see in] my women, thank Linda Carter!

CBM: How about Al Williamson?

CHO: Yeah, flow is a great word. Al Williamson is graceful. This may sound blasphemous [but] Al Williamson is, in my mind, the greatest black and white comic book/comic strip artist. I know Hal Foster and Alex Raymond are two grand masters of comic art, but I think Al Williamson has a slight edge over Alex Raymond and Hal Foster—Al Williamson will be the very first to disagree with me. Well, actually Hal Foster's a little different—he's more of a Frazetta school, or I should say Frazetta is from the Hal Foster school of art. But Al Williamson is from the more graceful, realistic Alex Raymond school. I [don't] mean to belittle Alex Raymond, who is a comic genius, but I think Al Williamson has a slight edge over him. Because Al Williamson combines that beautiful, graceful drawing with the certain dynamic unique Al Williamson quality that Alex Raymond, not really lacked, but kind of shied away from. So I just absolutely love Al Williamson's artwork. It's just gorgeous. That's the perfect word for it: it's just gorgeous. He is the true master and I love him dearly.

CBM: What about Roy Krenkel?

CHO: Roy Krenkel is one of the unsung heroes of that whole group from the fifties [that includes] Frazetta, Williamson, Angelo Torres. I discovered Roy Krenkel kinda late, 'cause I'd never really seen enough of his work to make an informed opinion about him. It wasn't until recently—actually, the past four years or so—that I've been really, really exposed to his stuff, and he was incredible. He and Frazetta have the same quality in their work. Their sketches, side by side, they look almost identical. They had the same power, the same drama, the same draftsmanship. And the only problem that Roy Krenkel had was he was insecure. He would freeze up when he'd do the final, finished product. It's unfortunate, because he could have been one of the greatest illustrators—actually, he is one of the greatest, but he could have been more recognized.

CBM: Who's influenced your storytelling, and your sense of comic timing?

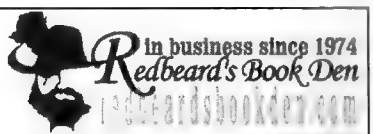
CHO: Humor-wise, I'm a big *Bloom County* fan. Berke Breathed, hands down, is one of my biggest inspirations in cartoon and comedy writing. Again, I was never a big newspaper comic strip fan because I thought they were boring, and poorly drawn. Just down-right crappy. I've always been exposed to comic book and book illustration, which were a lot more exciting and breathtaking. But it was Breathed who actually changed my mind about newspaper comic strips, because he made it funny, and made me want to read it. And, from Berke Breathed, I discovered *Calvin and Hobbes* and *The Far Side*. Those were the only three comic strips that I ever read, growing up. After they retired, I stopped reading newspaper comics altogether which is funny because I draw one for a living.

Later on, as I got older, when I was in high school, I went back and did research on the other great newspaper comic strip artists, like Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, Walt Kelly. Walt Kelly, in my opinion, is the greatest cartoonist who ever lived, hands down. He's the greatest, without a doubt. And then, through Walt Kelly I discovered Jeff Smith, who is absolutely another [great one], just a stunning, fantastic cartoonist. Will Eisner, and *Li'l Abner*, and all those great classic comic strips from the golden years.

NOTICE

Ron Jordan would like to let folks know that he will continue as the agent for **Gray Morrow**'s widow in dealing with and selling Gray's artwork.

Contact him at **funnybks01@aol.com** for information and available material.



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Another Parlor Game of Record Setting and Unsetting

His comic strip about "little folks" was the oldest in the country drawn by the same cartoonist. When he announced his retirement, his last strip was scheduled to be published in February, and then he died on the eve of the publication of the finale.

Charles Schulz, you say. But, no, it wasn't.

It was William Donahey. And he produced *The Teenie Weenies*. It debuted June 14, 1914, and its last installment appeared February 2, 1970, the day after Donahey died. A total of 56 years, longer by seven than Schulz's stint on *Peanuts*.

Well, not quite. Donahey's feature was discontinued twice (1924-33 and 1934-41), dropping his actual achievement to about 40 years, and those years were not consecutive. And for most of its run, *The Teenie Weenies* was a Sunday-only feature, a large single panel illustrating narrative text. Schulz, on the other hand, drew *Peanuts* every day for a little over 49 years. That's right: he died before he passed the happy half-century mark.

Donahey's **Teenie Weenies** were about the size of the average table salt shaker

Peanuts began October 2, 1950, as a daily strip, Monday through Saturday; the daily ended January 3, 2000. The Sunday version started January 6, 1952, and ended February 13, 2000. The daily ran for 49 years and 3 months, the Sunday, for 48 years, 1 month, and 2 weeks. From the first publication as a daily until the last publication of new material in the Sunday, Schulz toted up 49 years, 4 months, and 2 weeks. And except for the five weeks Schulz took off at his 75th birthday in 1997, his achievement was continuous. And he did it by himself, unassisted.

Which brings us to this month's competition. Whose record even compares?

How about Jim Russell? Jim Russell, the nearly legendary Australian cartoonist who died last summer at the age of 92, reportedly holds the world's longevity record for producing, single-handedly, the same continuously published comic strip (albeit under slightly different titles).

In 1939, Russell inherited *You & Me*, a comic strip about domestic bliss and travail, from another legendary down-under cartoonist, Stanley Cross. Cross had launched *You & Me* in 1920, and by 1939, Russell was assisting him. (Cross is a revered figure in Australian cartooning: it is in his honor that the Australian "Reuben" for cartoonist of the year is named the "Stanley." Russell was presented with the first Stanley in 1985.)

Russell changed the strip's name to *Mr. & Mrs. Potts* and continued it and several other efforts during the War years. His morale-boosting endeavors took their most virulent form in a strip called *Adolf, Hermann, and Musso*, a broad burlesque ridicule of Axis leaders Hitler, Goering, and Mussolini.

In October 1950, *Smith's Weekly*, the newspaper for which Russell was working, ceased publication, and he took his sitcom strip to another newspaper, where it commenced as *The Potts* on January 23, 1951, daily and, eventually, Sunday. Russell added a new character, a ne'er-do-well but good-hearted elderly scamp that combined the distinctive traits of W.C. Fields and Andy Capp—Uncle Dick.

Altogether, then, by the time of his death, Russell had been doing some version of *The Potts* single-handedly for 62 years. And that's not all he did. He also ran a tourism-consulting

The POTTS and Uncle Dick By JIM RUSSELL
LITTERBUGS! THROWING THEIR PAPERS AND SCRAPS IN THE STREET!
AND THE POLICE DO NOTHING ABOUT IT!?
OUCH! THAT DOES IT! I'M GOING TO CLEAN UP THIS TOWN!
DON'T LITTER THE TOWN!
READ THIS FINE PAMPHLET
ANOTHER NATURE NUT!?
THEY SHOULD LOCK 'EM ALL UP!!
HE'S A RAVING RATBAG!
OKAY, SMART-GUY! COME WITH US!
HUH?
JUST LOOK AT ALL THIS LITTER YOU'VE CAUSED! IT'S DISGRACEFUL!!
YOU'D GET TEN YEARS IF I WAS THE JUDGE!

Uncle Dick became a major character in **The Potts** and was usually the star of the Sunday page

agency, administered various professional and amateur sports, wrote songs, published magazines, and appeared regularly on radio and television.

A cartoonist friend said, "The way he led his life, he never had any plans on dying."

Perhaps it goes without saying that Russell worked very fast. He said he did a daily in about two hours, a Sunday in four. That leaves 24 of the usual workweek's 40 hours for his other activities. One Aussie wag observed that although the drawings lost none of their crisp vigor, Russell in later years re-cycled gags every two years instead of the previous every six.

In an era of TV re-runs in which half the year is repetition, re-cycling gags every couple of years is scarcely a sin. And now that we're almost two years into the *Peanuts* re-runs, whatever onus re-cycling gags might have once hovered over the work has, by now, evaporated.

Several years ago, Russell was cited in the *Guinness Book of Records* for his achievement in producing the same comic strip longer than anyone else. At least, everyone said he was in *Guinness*, but I've never seen the citation in any of those annual compilations that *Guinness* issues. I saw that Johnny Hart is in *Guinness* for being the most syndicated daily comic strip cartoonist: *B.C.* and *The Wizard of Id* (drawn by Brant Parker), combined, are supposedly in 2,600 newspapers. But *Peanuts* alone was in that many at its peak. And so is Jim Davis' *Garfield*. And since Davis' name is now

(above) Herblock's self-caricature for his autobiographical book **A Cartoonist's Life**

(right) One of Herblock's all-time great cartoons, a perfect depiction of the panic of the late 1940s (just before it flowered into McCarthyism, a term Herblock invented) and its consequences

attached to another strip, *Mr. Potato Head*, he's surely surpassed Hart.

In any event, *The Potts* was a weekly feature for the first 11 years Russell did it, so the tally for his simultaneously producing a daily and Sunday strip is 51 years, not 62. And *The Potts* didn't have a Sunday version all that time. Still, Russell's record threatens Schulz's.

NEVER MIND WHAT THOSE MUGS SAY- SNUFFY... THIS IS A FREE COUNTRY, AND IF YOU'VE MADE UP YOUR MIND TO STAY FOR YOUR NEPHEW'S WEDDIN' PARTY- IT'S JAKE WITH ME--- AND THAT GOES FOR YOUR ASTUTE WIFE, TOO

Here's DeBeck's Snuffy with his wife Loweezy shortly after first meeting Barney Google in 1934

So does Fred Lasswell's record on *Snuffy Smith*. His byline appeared on the strip in March 1943, when Lasswell inherited *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith* from its originator, Billy DeBeck. And when Lasswell died last March (almost to the day his signature had first been affixed to the strip), he'd been doing it for 58 years. But much of that time, he employed assistants.

Herbert L. Block is yet another record-holder in the stratospheric statistics of unassisted longevity. When Herblock (as he signed his work) died last October, he'd been producing an editorial cartoon almost every day for 72 years. But not every day, which is amongst our criteria in the present contest. So although Herblock's achievement is gargantuan, he isn't in the same league as Schulz and Russell, who each drew more than one picture in their daily features—and did it every day, seven days a week. Unassisted.

Columnist Harvey caricatures Milton Caniff and some of his creations; in no order they are: Happy Easter, Hotshot Charlie, the Dragon Lady, a youthful Terry, Summer Smith Olson, Steve Canyon and Copper Calhoon

YOU'LL NEVER GET NEAR THE PALOMITAS WITH THOSE SPURS!
PORQUE NO?
TOO MUCH LIKE BELLING THE CAT!
JINGLE JANGLE JINGLE JING
JANGLE JING
JING

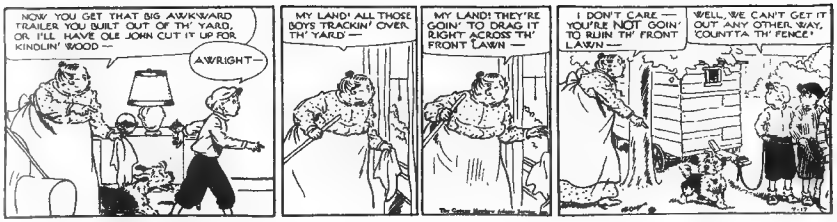
Housekeeper Tehuana Mama and Gordo up to their usual tricks

IT'S NOT NEW, MY TWERP! MAN HARNESSED SOLAR ENERGY AGES AGO!
WHY- PELON'S PLACE HERE IS A VERITABLE RESEARCH LABORATORY!
THE SUN'S POWER IS ABSORBED BY THE GRAPE AND STORED FOR US IN THESE COLORFUL CLAY VESSELS!
PROFESSOR, BREAK OUT ANOTHER SOLAR BATTERY!
HERE'S TO SCIENCE!
HERE'S TO SUNSHINE!
CASH AN' CARRY, PLEASE, POET! I-UH- DON'T CHARGE 'BATTERIES' HERE!
YOU MEAN THIS THING RUNS ON GRAPE JUICE?
YOP! TOKAY IN THE TANK--- SAUTERNE IN THE RADIATOR-- AN' CHAMPAGNE IN THE BATTERY!
EL COMEHALEY
OKAY, GORDO! BLAST OFF!
HOW TIGHT, MEESTER KNOTT, I'M GONNA DOBBLE-CLOTCH!
POW HIG VOOO OOM
GET OFF THE FLOOR AN' OPEN YOUR PIES, HOMBRE! YOU'RE MEE-SING ALL THE SCENERY!

Arriola's drawings were often highly decorative, as in the top strip here

Hank Ketcham, who died last June, produced *Dennis the Menace* seven days a week for just over 50 years (starting in March 1951), and although he did the daily panel unassisted for about four decades, the Sunday was in the hands of his assistants for most of the run. Others in the same boat include Frank King (*Gasoline Alley*, 1918 until his death in 1969, but assisted much of the time), Harold Gray (*Little Orphan Annie*, 1924-1968, only 44 years), Paul Robinson (*Etta Kett*, 1925-1974, but the Sunday didn't start until 1932), Dick Wingert (*Hubert*, 1945-1994), Chester Gould (*Dick Tracy*, 1931-1977). All used assistants. (And so have I in cobbling up this pile of records: Merlin Haas, who consulted Allan Holtz' *Strippers Guide* and Ron Goulart's *Encyclopedia of American Comics*.)

All these records are set, established. Other records are still in the making. Mort Walker is in his 52nd year producing *Beetle Bailey* in collaboration with a team of cartoonists and gag writers. Walker is the only still living cartoonist active in the production of a daily comic strip after 50 years.


NOW YOU GET THAT BIG AWKWARD TRAILER YOU BUILT OUT OF TH' YARD, OR I'LL HAVE OLE JOHN CUT IT UP FOR KINDLIN' WOOD —
AWRIGHT—
MY LAND! ALL THOSE BOYS TRACKIN' OVER TH' YARD —
MY LAND! THEY'RE GOIN' TO DRAG IT RIGHT ACROSS TH' FRONT LAWN —
I DON'T CARE — YOU'RE NOT GOIN' TO RUIN TH' FRONT LAWN —
WELL, WE CAN'T GET IT OUT ANY OTHER WAY, COUNTTA TH' FENCE!

Cap Stubbs' grandma was a major player in Dumm's strip

Records like these are shattered every year. Every day. At the time she stopped doing *Cap Stubbs and Tippie* in 1966, Edwina Dumm probably held a record for continuous production of a daily comic strip. Arguably the first woman editorial cartoonist working in the regular daily as opposed to the suffragette press, Dumm started *Cap Stubbs* in 1918 and ended it 48 years later. But the Sunday ran only 1934-1963. Dunno about assistants.

At the time he retired *Gordo* in 1985, Gus Arriola had been a slave to a daily deadline for 44 years, then a record for unassisted production of a seven-day comic strip. Retailing the humorous adventures and amorous preoccupations of a portly Mexican bean farmer ("gordo" means "fat"), his perspicacious nephew, the menagerie of their farm animals and the other picturesque citizens of their village, *Gordo* started in the fall of 1941, but, upon close examination, the 44-year run was not continuous. Nor was it entirely unassisted.

The continuity of the run was interrupted for six months when Arriola joined the Army in October 1942. Assigned to an animation unit, which left most of his evenings and weekends free, Arriola was able to resume doing the strip as a Sunday-only feature in May 1943; and he reinstated the daily in June 1946. And right about then, he had an assistant for a year or so. If you add in the year Arriola did the strip before going into the army during World War II, you get 39 years solo on a daily comic strip. But for consecutive unassisted years on a seven-day strip, we start with 1947, which yields a 38-year run. And in 1985, that was the record.

HE'S 100 YEARS OLD AND SURE LOOKS IT
WHY SHOULDN'T HE? DIDN'T HE DRAW US FOR NATIONAL RETAIL HARDWARE MAGAZINE FOR SIXTY TWO YEARS?

(above) Russell Johnson chronicled the ups and downs of small town hardware business through several generations and much of the 20th Century

(below) Mr. Oswald, cartoonist Russell Johnson said, bore a more than passing resemblance to Johnson's father

I just happen to know all this because 1) *Gordo* was my favorite comic strip as a youth and 2) I recently studied up on it for a book of mine exclusively about Arriola and his creation, *Accidental Ambassador Gordo* (University Press of Mississippi, 2000, just to complete the shameless plug in as brazen a manner as possible).

Nits similar to those I just picked with Arriola can be picked with Milton Caniff, who, in 1985, had matched Arriola's achievement. By that time, Caniff had been doing *Steve Canyon* continuously for 38 years. Famed for a 12-year tour on *Terry and the Pirates* (1934-1946), Caniff actually racked up a much more impressive record. He started hitting daily deadlines with a comic strip in July 1933 with *Dickie Dare*; by the time he died in 1988, he'd been producing a daily comic strip for 55 years, 53 of which involved a Sunday strip. But for most of his career, he was assisted. He had a letterer almost from the beginning of *Terry* (Frank Engli; then Shel Dorf for the last 12 years on *Steve Canyon*); and Dick Rockwell joined Caniff in the early 1950s to pencil *Steve Canyon*. A number of these and other fascinating details you can find in a forthcoming book I compiled and edited; called *Milton Caniff Conversations*, it collects a dozen or so fugitive interviews with Caniff. It'll be out in April from the Mississippi Press folks.

Some achievements in long-distance comics production are stunning even if they evade the categories of my qualifying criteria. Russell Johnson, who is interviewed by Rob Stolzer in a forthcoming issue of *Hogan's Alley*, produced *Mister Oswald* for 62 years. *Mister Oswald* was a charming full-page comic strip about life in a small-town hardware store that appeared monthly in the trade journal *Hardware Retailer*. Johnson's first four decades on the feature were collected in book form in 1968, *Forty Years with Mister Oswald*, published by the National Retail Hardware Association in Indianapolis, a book in which I have no financial interest whatsoever although I wish I did. (I mention these tomes because we're all collectors of cartoonery who meet here every month or so, and some passionate soul might want to glom onto one or another of the books. They are presumably fairly easy to find on the Internet.) Johnson died in 1995 at the ripe age of 101. An astonishing performance.

When I asked about longevity records on an Internet list, the one I'd never heard of was *Billy the Boy Artist*. Starting November 5, 1899, it ran through the early months of 1955, a total of 54 years. It was, I gather, a Sunday strip, and for its entire run, it was drawn by Ed Payne. It's listed in the *Editor & Publisher* directory of syndicated features only for 1941, when it was apparently being distributed by Bell Syndicate. So it may have run nowhere else except in the *Boston Globe* all those other years.

Craig Yoe, cartooner and writer and compiler of the absolutely awe-inspiring anthology of stray facts about comics, *Weird but True Toon Factoids* (Grammercy Books, 1999), another tome in which I have no financial interest—and neither does Yoe: 100% of the proceeds goes to two charitable foundations—sums up the achievement of *Billy the Boy Artist* better than I could hope for: "The really astounding thing about *Billy the Boy Artist* is not that it was drawn by the same artist for 54 years but that it used one lame joke badly drawn over and over and over and over and over for all those many decades. I wish I was kidding. What a Payne."

Better to end with a pun than not. And Yoe's book is fraught with them. Fraught. Lots of pictures culled from hard-to-find places, too.

All things considered, Charles Schulz is still the U.S. champion for seven-day unassisted consecutive comic strippery. Nobody else did one strip solo for so long. If you have another candidate, lemme know.

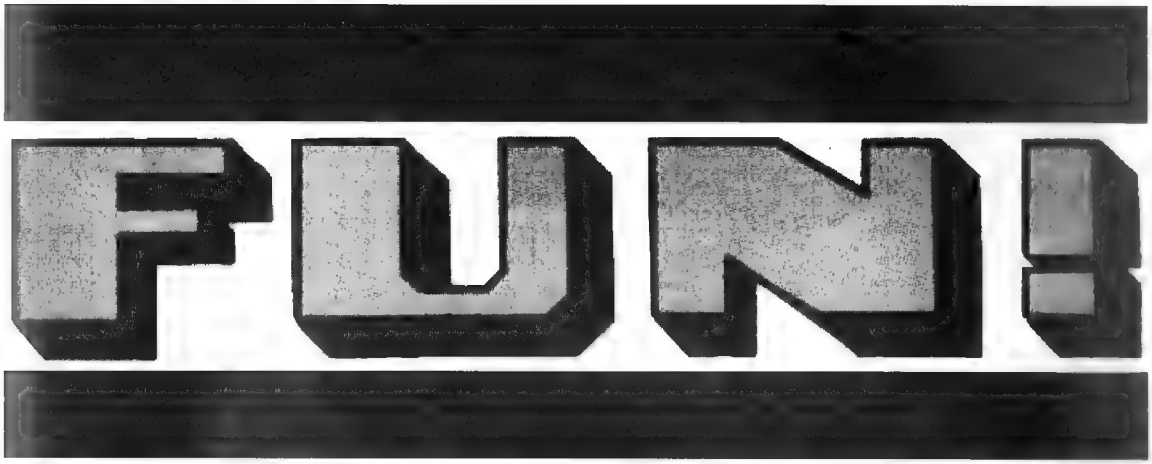
The trend today is for shorter tenure. Bill Watterson retired from *Calvin and Hobbes* after ten years; Gary Larson, from *The Far Side* after 15 years; and Berk Breathed gave up the daily grind on *Bloom County* after about 9 years and the Sunday servitude on its successor, *Outland*, after about 5 years. And here's Frank Cho, taking his *Liberty Meadows* cast into comic book format after less than five years in the funnies.

Doesn't look as if the newspaper comic strip game will be the same henceforth. If it ever was.

Next time, if Dagwood doesn't pile the cold cuts too high on that multi-layer sandwich of his, thereby attracting the attention of numerous midnight marauders like Offissa Pup and Heathcliff, who, in their stampede for a share in the snack, upset Apple Mary's cart, sending the entire ensemble into one of Tommy's tailspins, we'll pause to join that issue's tribute to Hal Foster, his Tarzan (and Hogarth's) and his Prince of Thule, Valiantly done withal (not to say executed). Until then, stay 'tooned.

HEY, YOU BLOCKHEAD! YOU CAN'T TRICK ME: I INVENTED THIS GAG!
Rabbits playing football? I suppose next he'll be flying a Sopwith Camel!
DON'T THINK OF IT AS A FOOTBALL--
THINK OF IT AS A GREAT PUMPKIN!
With affection and admiration
HARVEY
Good-bye, Sparky--and God bless

Good Grief Is the Kind Warmed by the Best Memories



"Discovered" and introduced by Bob Beerbohm

The following comics history essay by comic book pioneer Lloyd Jacquet dates from July 1957. The comic book business had just undergone major melt-down with the final collapse of American News Company. Even Martin Goodman had to shut down most of his output and spend time using up back inventory. No new work was being bought.

Note that some of the "detail" data of dates, etc., is a shade faulty from a perspective of (then) 23 years later; what's exact is the emotion, the excitement, that was felt then as he knew they were forging a new medium in America. He probably tossed this off from rote memory under a deadline for the fabled *Newsdealer* magazine.

What we need to know is where the rest of Lloyd Jacquet's book might be. Anybody have a clue? Did he leave his papers to some university? It needs to be dug out by some one who knows Lloyd's background surrounding his death and last will and testament. Ultimately it is Major Malcolm Nicholson who bridges the gap between Platinum and Gold in our slowly-evolving definitional eccentricities of the comic book "eras" in America.

Observe how Dell figures in certain key concepts concerning the little known *Comic Cuts* tabloid comics magazine from England in 1934. That makes Dell involved in comic books in the years 1929-1931, 1933-34, and 1936 onwards. The overlap of *Famous Funnies* and *Comic Cuts* is not to be taken lightly.

THE COMING OF THE COMIC [BOOK]

by Lloyd Jacquet

[written in 1957]

One of the creators of the comic (book) recalls the colorful days of its beginning. THIS PAGE out of the early history of the Comic Book is taken from notes by the author, who is currently engaged in writing a "History of the Comic Book." Mr. Jacquet was a comics pioneer and relates here the start of that history-making venture.

When Major William Malcolm Nicholson set up his card table and chair in an eleventh-floor office of the Hathaway Building in New York that Fall of 1934, these most modest beginnings sparked off what can rightly be called the "comic book era."

Major Nicholson had done a good deal of high-grade writing for the pulps, and had lived in Europe in various posts as American Military Attache. He had noticed the very great interest that existed over there for the little cartoon weeklies bought by boys and girls on newsstands for pennies. When he came back to the U.S. after his last stay abroad, he looked over the American newsstand, and thought that the European juvenile weekly papers, with their picture-story continuities, their colorful illustrations, and their low price would appeal to the American boys and girls in the same way.

He knew that those European publications were made up of new material, specially drawn and produced for each

little magazine. He also knew that the American presentation of such material would have to be different, and merely importing, or translating European-produced features for republication here was not the answer. That is why he was not unduly concerned when he saw a British paper called *Comic Cuts* appear on the newsstands in America. This was a self-cover tabloid production, with color on the front and middle spread, printed here from mats mailed from the other side. It sold for 5 cents and enjoyed a moderate success, largely because of its novelty.

(left) British self-covered tab **Comic Cuts** from 1912, (right) **New Fun** #2 (Mar 1935) was also tab but with slick cover

This was in 1934, and *Comic Cuts, the Funnies* was distributed in the States by Dell Publications. But Major Nicholson was more aware than ever that this was not the answer to a possible wide sale for a series of juvenile publications of particular design and appeal.

This was about the time I joined with him in his project. It was still embryonic, but beginning to take form under Nicholson's direction. We were in the depression then, and it was not too difficult to secure writers and artists—but it was a task to instruct them as to exactly what was wanted. We finally rounded up a small but gifted group of creative people, and we produced our first issue of a monthly magazine composed of original features and material, and which was called, simply, *FUN*.

It was of tabloid size, 32 pages and cover, printed in four colors on the presses of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, my old alma mater. We had many problems of production, and one of the greatest was getting four-color benday plates photo-engraved at a reasonable price in the City. In those days there was no stream-lined production that we have today. But with the help of the very experienced *Brooklyn Eagle* color people, we were able to get the first issue of *FUN*, with a press run of 120,000 copies, off to the distributors in the early part of 1935. The national distributor was S-M News Company, whose enlightened management either succumbed to Major Nicholson's charming salesmanship, or, as I prefer to believe, foresaw the tremendous and untapped market that this pioneering effort was opening in the United States.

The sales of this first issue were in the vicinity of 50% of the print order, no mean result for a brand-new unheralded publication idea so revolutionary as this one. Our spirits were high. Cooperation was extended by all hands at a fever pitch. And so, we blithely launched into the production of issue number two. It might be interesting to look back and see who were some of our pioneering artists, writers and editors in this early phase.

Vince Sullivan, one of our artists, became editor for *Detective Comics* for National Publications, and now runs his own comics magazine publishing business; Whitney Ellsworth, another artist, has been for years editor-in-chief for the National Comics Group; Lyman Young, a very capable artist, became the national newspaper syndicate artist for King Features; Stevenson became a *Saturday Evening Post* illustrator; Schuss delighted the nation with his syndicated panels; Larriar is the author of popular anthologies on cartoon humor; Adolph Barreaux was for some time a pulp and picture-magazine editor, and so it goes for several more, some of whom are today art directors of famed advertising agencies in New York. They were all "trained," we might say, in this little visionary shop where we all made history in producing the first "original" comic magazine.

For some reason, the second issue of *FUN* was labeled *New FUN*, and it went out under this name, which it kept for some time. But *New FUN* was expensive to produce, because of the larger format, and it was running into some little difficulty. So Major Nicholson came out with *More Fun*—and this was natural, because many artists and writers, intrigued by this new magazine idea, were now flocking to us. We had the pick of the best material available. Much of this went into *More Fun*, produced in the now-familiar quarter-fold size of the regular comic book. This was in the latter part of 1935. When National bought out Nicholson's property some years later, *More Fun* was one of the titles included in the sale, and it was

[continued on page 77]

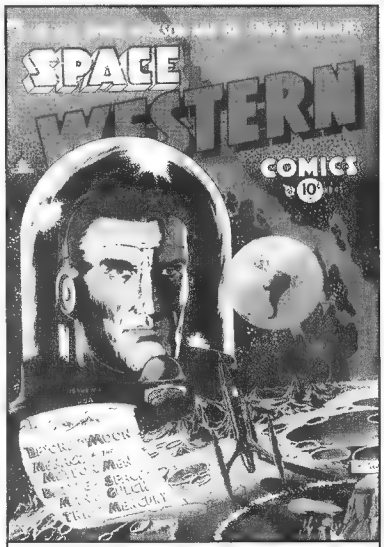
NEW FUN COVER © 2002 DC COMICS

Oddball Comics © 2002 by Scott Shaw! CBM88-2

The story of how Hank Roper led the members of a science fiction club, armed with fly sprayers, against the atomic weapons of the invaders from outer space, has until now, been withheld—mostly because we were afraid you'd think we were crazy for telling it—anyway, this is how the whole thing came about!

Here's another issue of one the most Oddball Comic series of 'em all! As wonderfully ridiculous as this entire funnybook is, its absolute highlight has to be the story entitled "The Battle Of Spaceman's Gulch," featuring Hank Roper! You've gotta give Charlton credit for their honesty! Spurs Jackson, and his Indian pal Strong Bow, have been asked to investigate some "recent moon eruptions," so he leaves Hank in charge of the visiting "fen."

According to Spurs: *"'Fen' are SCIENCE FICTION FANS, Hank, and the 'Descon' is the DESERT CONFERENCE! Our local science fiction club, the 'Dehyrates', are all holding their annual outing near here. So I invited them over for a visit...they'll be in costumes...dressed as something from outer space! The fen will land here in a plane rigged up to look like a spaceship."* Of course, when a space ship does land nearby, it turns out to be an invasion of insectoid alien invaders from Neptune called the Artopods! (So, which is worse, artopods or sci-fi fans? As Jack Benny would say, "I'm thinking...!") Hank's reaction is like something out of a sitcom:



Space Western Comics
Vol. 1 No. 43 (April 1953)
Publ: Capital Stories, Inc. (Charlton Comics)
Cover Artist: Stan Campbell

"Okay...that's enough kidding! Come on, take off the mask and come in the house...HEY! That's no mask!"

Jawa (!), the leader of the Artopods, plans to dissect Hank for study by their scientists, but first he has Hank turn off the ranch's landing beacon-beam. But before Jawa can force Hank into his spacecraft, US Army troops arrive and engage in a one-sided battle against the superior technology of the Neptunians. In the midst of all this, the plane bearing the real "fen" lands! Hank escapes and warns the fen, who are wearing space suit costumes and carrying "Flit"-type spray guns! When Hank explains the situation, they spray the alien invaders with their "weapons," and soon the Artopods are dropping like, well, flies! The surviving aliens try to escape, but they're cut off by the returning Spurs and Strong Bow, who blast 'em from the sky! Later, as the gang reconnoiters:

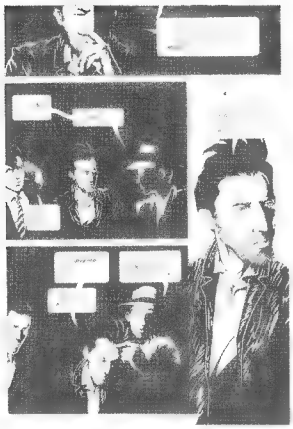
SCI-FI FAN: *Hi, Spurs! Come join our FANFERENCE and we'll tell you how we bammed the BEMS!*

SPURS JACKSON: *A "fanference" is a fan conference, and "BEMS" are Bug Eyed Monsters, Hank!*

[continued on page 80]

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

By J.C. Vaughn, Executive Editor



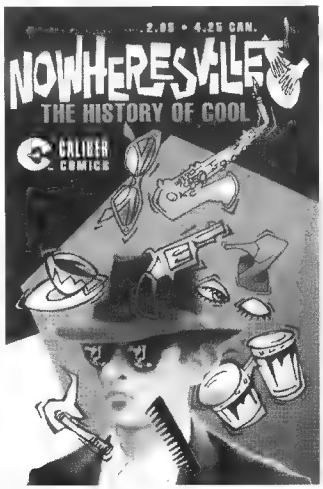
Ticket To Nowheresville

Here's a recipe for solid entertainment for connoisseurs of crime comics: Mix equal parts Zen attitude, clever Beat Generation dialogue and, of course, crime. Add good art. Publish infrequently. Stands up over six years.

Mark Ricketts has crafted a dangerously smooth ride straight up the on-ramp and onto the be-bop road that leads one place and one place only: Nowheresville. *It's crime comics with a beat, a combination that rings so authentic you'll find yourself looking for your copies of* On the Road *and* I, The Jury *at the same time.*

Originally published through Caliber Comics beginning in 1995, Nowheresville *is a highly compelling, incredibly literate read. Ricketts, a former Caliber contemporary of current hot creators including Brian Michael Bendis, David Mack and Galen Showman, landed his creation back in the "New & Noteworthy" section by arranging to publish it—finally!—in trade paperback format through Image. It's scheduled to be in the January 2002* Previews *and should be on sale in March 2002 with plenty of new and some revised material.*

Fans of crime fiction owe it to themselves to check out this decidedly entertaining book. Ricketts will also have several other projects surfacing in 2002. CBM *talked to him about Kerouac, comics, and like that...man.*



CBM: How did you get started in comics?

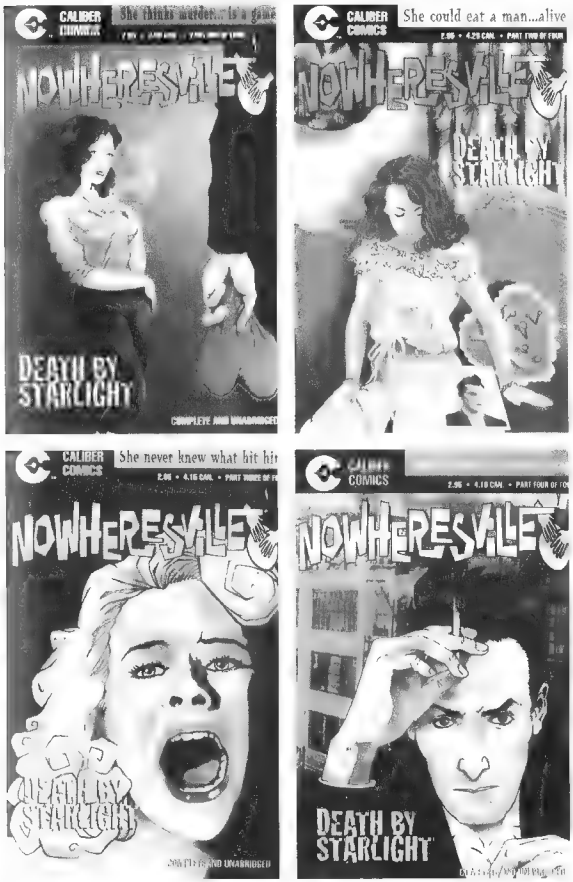
MARK RICKETTS: During the '60s, when I was a wee lad growing up in Arkansas my only source for comics was the inconsistent shipments to the local drug store. I thought Kirby was the man, until a cousin sent me magazine-sized copies of Eisner's *The Spirit*. I ate it up. I used to try to draw like both Kirby and Eisner, and decided at that point I wanted to be a comics artist. I studied art a bit, too. Then I got side-tracked. Hypnotically drawn into a rock 'n' roll band where I started writing songs and singing. Except for the occasional *Heavy Metal* magazine, I left comics behind. Didn't read them at all. Then my band moved from Arkansas to Chicago. We played, recorded and starved. To feed the poor, I picked up illustration gigs at *Playboy*. My contact and art director was former underground cartoonist, Skip Williamson (*Snappy Sammy Smoot*). He encouraged me to make comics. I was always a storyteller, a campfire yarn spinner, so I let loose. I got caught up in those golden Caliber days with Bendis, Davis, Locke, Mack and Showman. After a few years of that, I retired. Wanted to be a better writer and so I read books on the subject, took the McKee "Story" course, worked out my kinks and after a bit...felt renewed. After I won the Klasky-Csupo (*Rugrats*, *Wild Thornberries*, *Duckman*) scriptwriting contest, Brian Bendis encouraged me to return to comics and release *Nowheresville* as a graphic novel. He introduced me to Image publisher Jim Valentino and the rest is history. Or may be...

CBM: What were your early influences?

Ricketts: The influence for my creating *Nowheresville*: I had a revelation when reading the passage from Steve Allen's 1955 classic *Bop Fables* where Little Red Riding Hood questions the wolf in a grandma disguise by saying, "I don't want to sound square or anything, but you don't look like my grandmother at all. You look like some other cat." It dawned on me that this little basket carrying-chick was doing some detective work (big teeth, big ears, etc.) to solve a mystery.

CBM: When and how did your affinity for the Beat generation material first manifest itself?

Ricketts: Some kids go to college and they party their asses off, skate through classes and you know the rest. But some kids get all antsy about their place in the universe, experiment with drugs and try to, I don't know, touch the eye of God or something. That's the group I hung out with in my college days. We weren't completely crazy, but we were offbeat, unwashed, free-loving, pseudo-intellectuals into Zen, be-bop, sex, psychedelics and despair. Everyone in my tribe had a copy of *On The Road* and *Naked Lunch*. Like Neal and Jack, we'd pile into my jalopy and discover America. Most of us



got all screwed up and ended up dead or in rehab, but some of us escaped. I escaped, sorta, but I'm still fascinated.

CBM: For a brief while, there was quite a tribe of talented creators at Caliber. How did that happen?

[continued on page 69]

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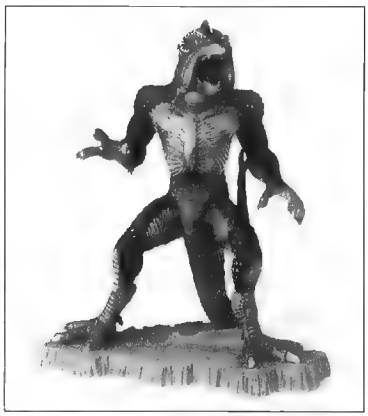
Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

Ray Harryhausen Meets Godzilla

What do legendary stop-motion animator Ray Harryhausen and giant radioactive lizard Godzilla have in common? I mean, besides their respective long careers in motion pictures. Both are having their classic cinematic triumphs translated into sculpture by a company called **X-Plus Company Limited**, based in Osaka, Japan.



I've been a big fan of Ray Harryhausen's movies since I was a kid. All that larger-than-life sci-fi action and fantasy adventure really fired the imagination. Harryhausen breathed life into his creatures like no other stop-motion animator before or since. If Ray did it, you believed it.

Which is why I was excited when I first heard about an upcoming line of limited edition statues based on Harryhausen's movie creatures. The photos accompanying the initial solicitations looked interesting, but it was difficult to gauge production values based on a few tiny pictures. But the pricing was enticingly low—low enough to risk taking the plunge sight relatively unseen. I ordered them all.

The first to arrive was **Talos**, the bronze giant from the original 1963 theatrical version of *Jason and the Argonauts*. He looked so good, and so accurate, you almost expected him to reenact the movie and step off his base. They definitely got my attention with this one. When was the next one coming?

Ymir, the alien reptilian biped from 1957's *20 Million Miles to Earth* followed two weeks later. I opened the box, and was blown away. It was awesome! My enthusiasm for, and anticipation of, subsequent releases grew exponentially.

It was a torturous four weeks until the **Cyclops**, from the 1958 film *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* finally arrived. The life-like detail was amazing; the pinkish coloring inside his gaping mouth looked almost too realistic. I made sure to keep my fingers clear of his teeth.

And then, FIVE MONTHS passed until the next release arrived. In fact, the next TWO arrived together. The six-armed, sword wielding **Kali** from the 1973 film *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* was accompanied by the golden-skinned half-man half-bull **Minoton** from 1977's *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*.

The Centaur from *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* showed up two weeks later, followed after four weeks by the **Griffin** from the same film. The bases of these two interlock to form a three-dimensional re-creation of a battle scene from the movie. At this point, releases have caught up to solicitations.

However, there was one surprise release that bypassed traditional advance solicitation and snuck in under the radar screen. X-Plus produced **another version** of bronze warrior **Talos** available exclusively through **Best Comics & Hobby Center** of Little Neck, New York in November 2001. This rendition depicts another scene from *Jason and the Argonauts* in which the giant statue-brought-to-life Talos is kneeling on his pedestal prior to stepping down and attacking Jason and his crew. As with the original Talos (and all the Harryhausen pieces), the attention to detail is superb.

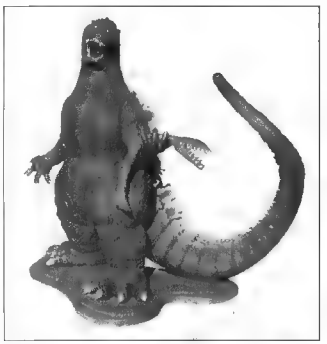
The overall quality of the finished products has far exceeded expectations. The detail. The finish. The heft. I've purchased statues for two to three times the cost that didn't impress me as much as these have. Over 12" tall, beautifully detailed and painted, limited editions of 1,000 pieces each, and RETAILING for under $100 each! There are a lot of $195 pieces on the market that don't hold a candle to the Harryhausen creature statues.

While the 12" line of Harryhausen statues rolls along, X-Toys has also been releasing a line of 4" **Harryhausen mini-statues** that they refer to as "chess pieces." Individually window-box packaged, but solicited in sets, the minis are just as meticulously detailed as their 12" cousins. They are produced in limited editions of 5,000, and retail for the

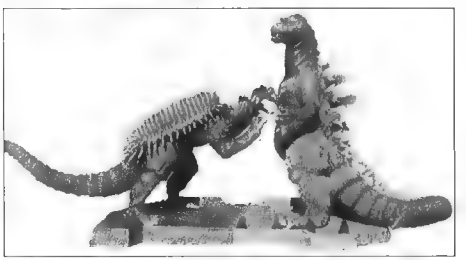
absurdly cheap price of $50 to $77 per set. Number of pieces in each set varies from five to seven, with a total of seven sets produced (for a total of 40 pieces) through 2001.

As with the Harryhausen statues, the **Godzilla** statues are stunning in their heft and attention to detail.

The first two releases, Godzilla and **Anguirus** are companion pieces from the 1955 film *Godzilla Raids Again*. The two bases interlock to re-create a battle scene from the movie.



Godzilla comes in three pieces that require simple assembly: the base, the body, and the tail. The detail is incredible, especially in a piece retailing for under $100. The bumpy, scaly texture of his hide, the rows of spiny plates running from the top of his head to the tip of his tail, the mouthful of pointy white teeth, the menacing glint in his beady little eyes, the exceptional paint job; you're just waiting for that radioactive fire to spew from his mouth!



Anguirus, Godzilla's nemesis in the film, is a giant mutant turtle-looking creature whose shell is densely studded with spikes of varying sizes, and with long spikes along the length of his lizard-like tail. Coming in four easily-assembled component pieces, the base, body, tail and shell, Anguirus is as meticulously detailed as his opponent Godzilla.

Next up was (surprise!) Godzilla, from the 1989 film *Godzilla vs Biolante*. The lone scheduled release representing this movie, Godzilla clutches one of his adversary's severed clawed tentacles in his hand, and looks more fierce and menacing than the *Godzilla Raids Again* version.

Future planned releases include Godzilla from the 1956 film *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*, Godzilla from 1962's *Godzilla vs King Kong*, Mechagodzilla from 1974's *Godzilla vs Mechagodzilla*, and two more dual releases.

The dual releases, with interlocking bases, are Godzilla and **Mothra** from 1964's *Mothra vs Godzilla*, and Godzilla and **King Ghidorah** from 1965's *Ghidorah, the Three-Headed Monster*. Only Mothra and King Ghidorah have been solicited to date, and are the only items in the X-Plus offerings so far to retail over $100. They come in at $150 each—still a bargain compared to the price tags on most other character statues.

So, between the Harryhausen line and the Godzilla line, if you're a fan of larger-than-life cinema creatures, X-Plus has got you in their sights!

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

[continued from page 67]

Ricketts: I have to give the credit to [Caliber publisher] Gary Reed. His eye for talent brought that dysfunctional family together. And, well, most of us have remained friends. Guy Davis was my biggest influence. His growth and integrity always kept me in check. As far as the other guys go, we challenged each other. In the old days, it was critiquing, commiserating, dreaming, encouragement and bad jokes. I'm closest to Brian Bendis and Galen Showman. Even when I dropped out, I was helping Brian put his *Jinx* covers together. Then Brian cast his lot towards Hollywood. As he read the books and the scripts, so did I. While I stayed hidden, attempting to hone my skills, Brian bravely fought on the battlefield of experience. Read about it in *Fortune and Glory*. And when Galen started working with P. Craig Russell, he shared the great man's insights with me.

CBM: What did Brian Michael Bendis say to encourage you to get back into comics?

Ricketts: Seems silly, but all he said was, "You're a storyteller. Tell stories!!" I'd been writing and especially working on a very intense project called "Space Junk" which I'm still working on. Should be working on right now. Anyway, I was working...just not publishing. My cabinets are spilling over with finished scripts.

Mark Ricketts' Nowheresville *trade paperback will be published by Image Comics in March 2002. To read more about it, check out his website at* ***www.nowheresville.com.***

The Michael Naiman Report
The Assault on the Grading Standard

The irritation of the grading service's sand continues to develop the pearls of my criticism surrounding their grading definitions.

From where I stand, there appears to be a direct conflict between the accepted, time-honored (and industry-wide accepted) Overstreet standards and the revisionist viewpoint of the grading service. Sure there is always room for modification of the Overstreet standard, but when there is an incentive (profit) to over-grade a book it appears as this might undermine the whole grading standard and, in the long run, hurt the hobby—and potentially lead to it's downfall.

One of the points that rubs me the wrong way is how the grading service seems to ignore Marvel chipping when considering a grade. Sure, they point out that it has chipping—but from what I can see they do not factor that glaring defect into the overall grade of the book. Have you ever tried to get them to explain their grading standards? They won't. They do not want to discuss it. They will not publish their standards. Why? Because it then leads to interpretation of their grade. And they do not want to justify (or explain) how they do it. One person grades one way—another person uses a different yardstick. Consistency is what grading should be all about. A hobby-wide consensus is necessary when talking about grading—not a secret grading system with no checks and balances. There's no recourse or discussion. What are the rules? Looks as if they are setting themselves up as judge, jury and executioner.

Where they really need improvement is in the grading of VF books. Since when do VF books have extensive Marvel chipping? According to the 31st edition of The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, the VF grade is described as follows:

> An excellent copy with outstanding eye appeal. Sharp, bright and clean with supple pages. Cover is relatively flat with almost no surface wear. Cover inks are generally bright with moderate to high reflectivity. Staples may show some discoloration. Spine may have a couple of almost insignificant transverse stress lines and is almost completely flat. A barely unnoticeable 1/4 inch crease is acceptable, if color is not broken. Pages and covers can be yellowish/tannish (at the least, but not brown and will usually be off-white to white).

I don't see that chipping was one of those "acceptable qualities" in the previous description!? Do you?

The recent Heritage auction had an Amazing Fantasy #15 graded VF- (their item #5422) with extensive chipping along the front cover. This grade is laughable. The Heritage copy (according to their description) "displays some moderate 'Marvel chipping' along the right edge of the front cover, but is otherwise very attractive and appealing, with rich cover colors, tight staples, and an excellent cut. CGC VF- 7.5 Off-white pages."

Since when does three inches of chipping that are missing from the cover look "very attractive"? And what exactly is "moderate"? Has anyone defined what this is? Must be the "Eye of the Beholder" syndrome. Or does the light refract differently when it is in a slab. Granted, Heritage didn't grade (or sell) the book. But how can CGC even interpret this as a VF book?

Another example of a "VF" that I personally examined was an Amazing Spider-Man #1 (CGC #0032754) which was graded VF 8.0. This book had a thumbnail size chip off the front cover and a 1/8-inch tear on the back cover coming off the staple. How can that be graded VF? Doesn't seem to meet the Overstreet standards.

When it comes down to it...does it really matter what the grade is? Or what the grading service says it is? To take a page from Seinfeld, "What's the deal with the CGC now charging to grade according to the value of the book?" Guess that a new profit center is needed because of the discontinuation of the "un-restoration" service. Suddenly CGC is in charge of valuation and grading? Seems like a major violation of impartiality here. If the grading service's revenue is based on what a book will sell for, isn't there an incentive to over-grade? The sales price differential between a VF and NM rare book can be tens of thousands of dollars. Where is the incentive to grade accurately?

Maybe they'll examine a book more carefully if they're charging more for the service. Who knows?...They might catch that Marvel chipping. But wait! If the dealer doesn't like the anointed grade, they won't give them any more books to grade. Uh-oh...the service might be out of business. Better give the dealers what they want! What a great way to once again liberalize and undermine the grading standards—all in the name of the Almighty Dollar!

I personally know some dealers who are afraid to criticize CGC because they fear retribution when it comes to grading their submitted product. Am I the only one holding this opinion? Am I the Lonely Voice in the Wind? What about you CBM readers? Have any personal grading service experience that you'd like to share?

There are some industry leaders who espouse that comic book organizations, hobbyists and dealers should all just get along for the good of the hobby, and that dissent is not productive. Without naysayers or public discussion, how can

CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#9 GD $710 92%
#18 GD $250 83%
#45 VG $225 97%
#66 VF $595 1.24X
#91 VG $80 60%
#136 GD $62 1.13X
#252 VG+ $220 88%

All-Flash
#17 VG $91 62%
#17 GD $71 96%
#26 VG+ $119 1.03X

Amazing Spider-Man
#1 VG $900 56%
#1 GD $640 80%
#4 VG $275 89%
#5 VF $1,150 1.02X
#11 VF $325 88%
#14 GD $125 83%
#14 VF $1,950 1.53X
#15 GD+ $55 Guide
#16 VG $100 1.2X
#17 GD $75 1.39X
#34 VF+ $104 78%
#38 VF $47 35%
#47 VF $170 2.13X
#50 FN $123 Guide
#51 VF $210 1.65X
#71 VF $63 1.52X
#97 NM $85 77%
#121 NM $275 1.83X

Atom
#7 VF $72 38%
#10 VG+ $20 91%
#18 VF $14 37%

Batman
#5 GD $450 Guide
#33 VG $92 39%
#41 GD $85 1.08X
#44 GD $100 68%
#52 VF $350 56%
#62 GD $140 1.20X
#101 VG $65 64%
#110 GD $25 58%
#110 VG+ $70 81%
#194 VF $25 1.03X
#203 GD $11 2.04X

Brave and Bold
#8 VG $46 56%
#29 FN- $300 63%
#30 GD $61 45%
#49 NM $50 66%
#61 NM $115 85%

Crime and Punishment
#1 VF $250 1.45X

Detective
#14 GD $600 1.06X
#68 VG $320 98%
#128 VG $135 73%
#162 VG $63 57%

Fantastic Four
#1 GD $720 90%
#2 GD $250 95%
#3 GD $200 1.11
#12 FN $260 84%
#28 VF $250 1.35X

Flash (GA)
#20 FN $500 85%
#51 GD $96 1.17X

Flash (SA)
#106 VG $177 69%
#119 VF $80 52%

Hulk
#1 GD $700 1.67X
#2 GD $200 1.11X
#3 VG $200 85%
#4 GD $150 1.35X
#5 GD $150 1.35X
#6 VG $250 81%

Iron Man
#1 NM $127 27%
#1 VF $115 39%
#1 FN $54 45%
#2 VF- $65 68%
#2 VG $41 1.53X
#55 NM $150 1.67X

Iron Man/Sub-Mariner
#1 VF $60 63%
#1 FN $36 90%

Justice League of America
#1 VG $500 95%
#2 FN $100 55%
#2 VG $85 70%
#4 FN $72 64%
#8 VF $57 30%
#10 VF- $66 35%

Mary Marvel
#7 VG $66 83%

Nick Fury Agent of Shield
#2 NM $57 1.14X

Planet
#1 GD $1,000 Guide

Prize
#60 VG $22 85%

Sensation
#55 FN $118 98%
#72 VG $80 Guide

Showcase
#8 GD $550 69%
#10 GD $175 88%
#12 VG $163 63%
#24 VG $69 29%
#24 VG $65 28%
#30 VG $48 40%
#35 FN- $108 59%

Silver Surfer
#1 VG $125 1.52X
#1 VG $80 98%
#1 VF+ $450 1.39X
#4 FN $150 1.25X

Strange Adventures
#9 FN $280 61%
#10 GD $70 1.09X
#13 FN $75 54%
#148 FN $16 Guide
#166 VF $25 98%
#171 VF- $22 86%
#207 VF $34 89%

Strange Tales
#57 VG $30 85%
#101 FN $230 97%

Superman
#11 FN $400 63%
#23 FN $350 79%
#27 FN $300 86%
#48 GD $145 1.83X
#70 VG $94 77%
#105 GD $30 75%
#227 NM $50 1.11X
#239 NM $55 1.1X

Tales from the Crypt
#44 FN $95 90%

Tales of Suspense
#12 VG $49 93%
#41 FN $91 53%
#58 FN $31 39%
#63 VG $38 87%

Tales to Astonish
#27 GD $124 47%
#33 FN $46 81%
#59 FN $27 55%

Tomb of Dracula
#10 NM $50 Guide
#13 NM $30 1.07X

Two Fisted Tales
#40 FN $33 83%

Wonder Woman
#8 VG $150 59%
#9 VG+ $161 64%
#10 VG $155 61%
#13 VG $150 75%
#17 FN $150 50%
#21 VG $99 59%
#49 VG+ $95 1.01X
#149 VF $26 74%
#159 GD $15 2.20X

Worlds Finest
#125 VG $13 1.03X
#130 VG $9 71%
#133 GD $12 1.64X

X-Men
#2 FN $475 1.1X
#3 VF $450 96%
#7 VG $100 1.6X
#10 VG $50 75%
#44 FN $22 Guide
#64 VF $10 20%
#127 NM $16 48%

anything change for the better? Open dialogue, not secretive backroom deals between a few influential folks is what the comic collecting hobby needs if it is to survive. Or are we going to be led down the primrose path all holding hands, wearing rose-colored glasses and pretending that everything is "right" with our hobby?

MARKET REPORTS

Robert Letscher II

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Demand overall has softened a bit since the Sept. 11th atrocities. Many mid-grade (or lower) copies of vintage comics can be obtained with relative ease on eBay, and often at large discounts below The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. However, continued record sales abound for top-grade copies of key issues and hot titles. And there is always interest in the true rarities. Moreover, growing demand for modern back-issues and a healthier new-book market bode well for the future of the industry. Numerous major players in the coin and collectible industries have "crossed over" into the comics arena, with surprisingly strong results. It appears the **coin, art, and currency aficionados** readily accept comics into their ranks, particularly when the books are certified by CGC. I predict continued strength for the hobby, growing along with consumer confidence in 2002. Happy Collecting!

Some of our **recent sales** include:

UN-slabbed comics: Amazing Spider-Man #18 NM- $1,000, #19 VF/NM $800, #50 NM $1,000; Avengers #11 VF/NM $480; Captain America #100 VG $60; Fantastic Four #46 VF+ $100; Incredible Hulk #181 NM- $1,000, NM $1,850; Iron Fist #14 VF+ $100; Silver Surfer #1 NM $1,000, #2 NM $400, #3 NM $400, #4 NM+ $1,500, #6, 7 NM $200 each; X-Men #6 NM- $1,000, #7 VF+ $500, #8 VF/NM $650, #10 VF+ $400, #25 NM $350, #27 NM $350, #94 VF+ $750, #100 NM- $100.

Slabbed copies: Combat Kelly #1 CGC NM 9.4 $50; Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love #1 CGC NM 9.4 $416; Flash #181 CGC NM 9.4 $133; Green Lantern #31 CGC NM- 9.2 $280, #85 CGC NM- 9.2 $171; H.R. Pufnstuf #8 CGC NM+ 9.6 File Copy $128; Justice League of America #34 CGC NM-9.2 $282; Marvel Spotlight #5 CGC NM 9.4 $430; Nick Fury #1 CGC NM 9.4 Circle-8 $260; Not Brand Echh #1 CGC NM 9.4 $287; Sgt. Fury #51 CGC NM+ 9.6 $128; Spider-Woman #1 CGC NM/MT 9.8 $167; Submariner Comics #32 CGC GD+ 2.5 (Rare/Origin) $1,000; Two-Gun Kid #83 CGC NM 9.4 $85; Warlock #1 CGC NM+ 9.6 $180; Worlds Unknown #1 CGC NM 9.4 $61; X-Men #95 CGC NM- 9.2 $175.

DC **Production Art**/Jack Adler Collection: Atom #28 Approval Cover $75; Atom & Hawkman #39 App. Cvr. $113; Detective #419 Hand-Colored Cvr. AND App. Cvr. $400; Flash #216 Hand-Colored Cover $185; Korak #52 Hand-Colored Cover $101; Our Army At War #183 App. Cvr $210; Star Spangled War #147 Hand-Colored Cvr. $100; Strange Adventures #193 App. Cvr. $90, #206 App. Cvr. $150, #216 App. Cvr. $150; Swamp Thing #8 App. Cvr. $125; Young Romance #178 Hand-Colored Cover $135.

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I just got back from the Heritage Auction, which was a complete success and saw many Gaines File Copies and Mile Highs bringing over estimate. I'm looking forward to their March auction! Silver Age sales are booming right now. The Baltimore Con was fantastic with great attendance. Some customers were looking for Marvels in high grade that were not slabbed—searching for a bargain. But many people were just walking around with their want lists looking to fill holes in their collection. DC war and Spider-Man were the two hottest titles.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #1 App. FN $1000, #5 VF- $500, #14 VF+ $1800, #28 VF+ $500; GI Combat #87 GD $125; Captain America #1, #2 and Batman #47 all GD for $7100; Green Hornet #1 GD $750; Mickey Mouse and The Phantom Blot GD $1400.

Tom Gordon

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We are consistently seeing items that we feel are **undervalued** in The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide that are bringing well above Guide. An example is the recent sale of a coverless copy of Adventures of Detective Ace King on eBay. The book Guides at $300 in good condition and the coverless copy sold for $400. This book is historically important. It and Detective Dan are both considered to be the first single-theme books and also the first comics with original art. One could speculate that one or two people are seriously looking for these types of books. Yet, this belief is far from accurate; each time one of these undervalued books is sold it brings well above Guide and is purchased by different collectors. Needless to say, look deep in that Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide and one is bound to find a number of "sleepers."

There are several well-known comics that are on many **want lists**—they include Flash Comics #56, Real Fact #3, and Strange Journey #3 (Titanic Cover). If these books could be bought at either Guide or up to two times Guide, you would still get a bargain. We have also seen a growing number of people looking for high-grade esoteric Golden Age comics. These books include funny animal and comic characters such as Barney Google, Dixie Dugan, etc. The

one comment I hear about all these types of books is that they are cheap. Let 's face it, $85-125 for an honest near-mint Golden Age comic is a steal! Especially when compared to other comics, how common is a high-grade book that is 60 years old?

Likewise, Fawcett books are very reasonable when compared to other companies of the time. A nice early run of Whiz Comics will cost you nothing compared to the same issues of Action Comics. Granted, the key issue is expensive. We recently purchased a large DC Bronze Age collection. Many of these books are high grade, which is not usually seen in Bronze Age comics. These books for the most part should sell quickly. Platinum Age Comics continue to sell when available. There are numerous new discoveries turning up in this area all the time. Many collectors would be surprised to know that paneled comics go back into the 1800's. There are also numerous "comic-like" books, which are not comics per se but have the look of a comic, that are also now being actively hunted. This material is scarce and, if you do find it, chances are good that finding another will be difficult.

We are seeing a major disappearing act in the **Comic Art** area right now. It appears that numerous quality covers and pages have left the market and some may be gone for good! We know of several serious collectors who have been spending time amassing the covers that they want and they don't plan to sell in the future.

Character Toys and Premiums continue to sell very well. If anyone followed the Mastronet auction they saw numerous quality items bringing good prices. Many of these types of collectibles are actually scarcer and cheaper than numerous Golden Age comics. Many of the pieces sold in the Mastronet catalog would be very difficult to find, let alone purchase in any condition. The rare Operator #5 Premium ring sold for over $8,000, the Spider Pulp Premium Ring sold for over $4,000, and the rare 1942 Wonder Woman button sold for over $1,000. If you are a serious collector of comics and are looking for something else to collect, premiums relate well to vintage comics. Another major advantage to collecting them is that they can be easily displayed and most can be handled easily. These types of collectibles are one of the closest things to "going home again." One can enjoy owning a childhood treasure or someone else's childhood treasure.

Now on to some **sales**:

Golden Age comics: Boy Comics #75 (Aurora Pedigree) CGC 8.5 VF+ $75; Ghost Rider #4 (Frazetta cover) GD+ 53.50; Kolynos White Guard Dentist Giveaway Comic 1949 VF $21.50; Roundup Vol.1 #4 (Mile High) CGC 7.5 VF- $135.

Character Toys and Premiums: Buck Rogers Birthstone Initial Premium Ring FN $225; Little Orphan Annie 1935 Brass Decoder FN $30; Superman Adventure Card #14 (with stamp) VG+ $190.

Comic Art: Shazam #30 page featuring the Marvel Family and Superman $112.50.

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I have just returned from my annual East Coast **convention tour**. On the agenda were the three-day National show in New York City, a one-day show in Philadelphia and the two-day Mid Ohio con in Columbus. Overall attendance was down in NYC but not the other two. Sales were down at all three shows but it was still a successful trip considering how good sales were last year. Most declines can be linked to this year 's weaker economy and the 9/11 attacks. It was especially difficult to get in and out of NYC so I had to stay there instead of at relatives in N.J. Fortunately due to reduced tourism the hotel rates were very good for N.Y. I will have to think carefully about doing these shows next year.

Some **sales of note** were:

Golden Age: Captain America #7 PR (logo cut) $450, #67 FR $155; Young Allies #17 FR $150, Crackajack Funnies #42 VG $80, #43 VG- $72, Green Hornet #16 FR/GD (Pcfc) $60; Sub-Mariner #30 VG $270; Wonder Comics #15 VG/FN $375; Human Torch #33 PR $85.

Atomic Age: Young Romance #27 FN/VF $50; Strange Tales #4 FN/VF $225; Sensation Mystery #114 FR/GD $40; Black Cat Mystery #42 GD+ $38; Tomb Of Terror #10 VG- $55; Bible Tales of Young Folks #1 VG $48; Marvel Tales #131 VG- $40; Tales of Suspense #15 VG+ $60.

Silver Age: Tales of Suspense #6 VF+ $416; Avengers #1 VG+ $400, #4 VG $250; Fantastic Four #1 FR/GD $540; Daredevil #1 VF+ $1400.

Magazines: Savage Sword of Conan #1 FN $20; Savage Tales #4 FN+ $10; Vampirella #23 VF $30, #24 VF $30; Heavy Metal #1 VF/NM $20.

John E. Petty

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Heritage Comics Auctions' (HCA) first **Signature auction** has come and gone, and we couldn't be happier with the results—703 of the 845 lots in the sale sold, bringing in a total of $960,649.05. Not bad in what many are considering difficult economic times. Floor bidding was active and exciting as expected, but we were pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming participation of phone and mail bidders and those who used eBay 's Live Auctions to bid live through the Internet. According to our after-auction reports, Internet bidders were by far the largest group, with nearly 400 participants, and the biggest winners, walking away with nearly one-third of the sale by dollar amount.

It came as no surprise to anyone that the top money makers were the CGC-graded books in exceptionally high condition. The Romance titles were also strong performers, as were the Pre-code Horror books (no surprise there).

Pedigreed books also did well, with Mile Highs once again proving that they've lost none of their collector appeal.

On the other side, we saw an increased aversion to restored books. The dreaded "purple label" seems to be a red flag to collectors. Also, Bronze Age books, once so hotly desired and collectible, seem to have slowed, even in high-grade.

Original art continues to be red-hot, with Marvel art leading the pack. The Hildebrandt Spider-Man painting we offered sold for $4,140, while the Alex Horley Avengers painting done for a Dynamic Forces litho sold for $4,600. The one surprise in this category was just how much Kirby originals have softened in the market. Two beautiful Avengers pages (one from issue 2 and one from #3) failed to meet reserve, as did a nice page from X-Men #2. It seems that the ripples from the glut of the Christopher Collection are still being felt.

As we continue to work on our next Signature auction (March 15-17, 2002 in Dallas, TX), here are a few **more highlights** from our last sale: An Amazing Spider-Man #1 in CGC 9.2 brought $40,250 (Lot 5423, 9.4 The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide value: $25,000), and the original John Buscema cover art to Silver Surfer #1 (Lot 5499) brought the same $40,250. Realizing $25,300 was a MAD #1 in CGC 9.6 (Lot 5070, 9.4 Guide: $6500), part of the complete Gaines File #3 set that brought $88,607.50, about 4.25 times the 9.4 Guide value. (Its owner had purchased the set only six years ago for $20,000 and was hoping it would bring about $60,000.) A Special Edition #1 in CGC 9.4 from the Denver collection (Lot 5255, 9.4 Guide: $9200) realized $25,450; a Brenda Starr #14(2) with Mile High pedigree in CGC 9.4 (Lot 5281, 9.4 Guide: $760) brought an eye-popping $10,062.50—13.25 times The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide value!

Movie posters were another strong category, with a Man from Monterey three-sheet bringing $13,225, a Maltese Falcon half-sheet realizing $8625, the African Queen British Quad totaling $7762.50, a Roaring Twenties display sheet going for $5060 and an exceptional Tarzan the Ape Man Austrian litho hitting a final price of $9200.

For a complete list of prices which were realized, please visit www.heritagecomics.com and click on the link for "Permanent Auction Archives."

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Sept. 11 was devastating to the comic book market. Our in-store **sales dropped** anywhere from 40-60%. This lasted up until the last week of November. Our in-store sales now are approximately 25% lower than normal. Our e-Bay sell-through rating went from 48% to a mediocre 32%. We believe that our eBay sell-through rating will begin to fluctuate between 25-35%. We are on average putting up four times the auctions, in order to generate the same dollar sales as before Sept. 11. We are still selling key comics online at a slow but steady pace. At the present time, it seems to be a buyer's market on e-Bay. It is anyone's guess as to how long this slump will last.

There is, however, some ray of hope from all of this: we have been selling a lot more weird titles online, and earning premium prices for them. For DC, titles such as Challengers of the Unknown and Sea Devils—it may be strange, but they seem to hit as soon as we list them. We 've managed to sell nearly 80% of our run of Sea Devils, from issues #1-32. With Gold Key, we are selling Magnus: Robot Fighter, Space Family Robinson and Lost in Space. We will have reports for the Phantom and Turok: Son of Stone in our next report.

In-store sales for older books has been virtually non-existent. We see absolutely no change in this anytime soon. It is hard to believe it is Christmas. It feels more like February. Hopefully, we will be able to report more in the near future, but as stated, the slump has hurt sales tremendously.

Books that we've **sold in the store**: Uncanny X-Men # 96 VF- $75, #100 VF- $85, #101 VF+ (variant) $110.

e-Bay sales: Amazing Spider-Man #6 VG+ $200, #7 VG $150, #8 VG $150, #14 VG $300; The Brave and the Bold #28 VG+ $500; Justice League of America #1 VG $500; Showcase #1 FR $125.

Jamie Newbold /Gino Siragusa

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As I write this column, December 1st is right around the corner. Over two months have passed since our country's financial status took a sudden, downward turn. Initially, our store braced for a drop in business—that never occurred. We have noticed an **increase** in the sale of new comics. Back issue sales, specifically Silver and Gold, are sporadic, which is not unusual. We see highs and lows in that market every month. It all depends on what stock is on hand, who's shopping us and what prices are being sought.

Repeat customer business is growing among our back issue sales. We attribute that more towards customer service and having the right books at the right time, than any other factors. I've noticed a decrease in the frequency of inquiries for hot-button comics.

We are accumulating pre-Code Horror and Fox books, without significant sales, for the first time. Inquiries are down for Timelys, but up for Marvel key issues from the 1960s. We have watched a steady increase in Bronze Age Spider-Man comics sales, as expected. The upcoming Spider-Man movie seems to be in the minds of each of the buyers. We 've begun dabbling in a little movie speculation, ourselves, as we quietly hunt down early Spider-Man back issues for resale.

Speaking of Bronze Age comics one constant is the frequency of 1970s back issues sales. We see a definite break in customer desirability between the Silver and Bronze Age material. Our customer base slams the "sales door" shut on comics with cover prices below the original 20-cent imprints. In fact, I bet for every 20-cent Amazing Spider-Man issue we have in stock, we probably have 5-10 issues of almost every, earlier 12-cent Amazing Spider-Man comic, above issue 21. We continue to sell Bronze Spideys well beyond any period in our history as a retail business. And that does not include the unfilled orders for those very same 20-centers. Spider-Man's popularity, and all it's merchandise, are on the rise. Right now, I wish I were Steve Ditko or Johnny Romita Sr.!

Golden Age: Batman #43 VG $150, #98 FN $150; Blackhawk #25 VG/F $100; Black Magic #30 VG $36; Vault Of Horror #27 VG/F $50; Weird Science #14 G/VG $38.

Silver Age: Action #399 VF $9; Amazing Spider-Man #22 F/VF $115, #64 NM- $48; Avengers #1 F/VF $900, #6 FN+ $90; Beware (Marvel) #1 VF+ $18; Blackhawk #112 VG $31; Chamber of Darkness #8 NM $30; Chamber of Darkness Special #1 NM $35; Daredevil #1 FN $450; Incredible Hulk #108 VF/NM $45; Justice League of America #37 VF $70; Tales To Astonish #40 F/VF $140; World's Finest #151 F/VF $18; X-Men #95 FN+ $56.

Greg White

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Hello from Central Florida. We are back from our New York trip and just getting into our winter groove. Autumn sales at the store were average. We held our own but did not set any records. Considering the fact that another long-standing comic book store is going out of business in the Orlando area this winter we are thankful to be having a **decent year**. It is certainly a challenge to run a successful over-the-counter retail shop in the face of increasing Internet competition and a generally fickle buying public.

The few conventions that are left have been ok but nothing great. The collector crowd was dollar poor and few decent sales (over $100) took place. eBay has taken its toll on comic conventions. Many collectors are filling their needs over the Internet now-a-days and no longer feel the need to attend local shows. The over-the-counter retail business is forever changing. Many stores will not survive. Internet sales at close-to-retail price would be fine, however that is usually not the case.

For the most part the Internet mindset is that of a flea market and collectors expect huge discounts. Not good if a dealer has paid a fair price for a collection and is looking to make a reasonable markup. The next year or two will be interesting.

Silver Age 1955-1969: The store has been quiet this autumn. Since Sept. 11 we have seen few tourist sales. A few Marvels have sold. High-grade keys always seem to be in demand—however, often times when I produce the book the collector will not pay retail for it. The same story was true at comic conventions this year. Please keep in mind that I do not believe in slabbed comic books. Certain DC titles remain popular (Batman, Flash, Showcase) but most are slow. Non-Marvel and DC silver age remain stagnant, especially at Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide prices.

Recent sales: Amazing Spider-Man #46 VF/NM $80; Batman Annual #2 FN $85; Brave & Bold #30 GD $75; Showcase 22 VG $300.

Golden Age 1935-1955: We moved a couple early Batman this month. Most sold below Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. Many of the longstanding DC gold books will sell at 20%-40% below Overstreet Guide. I just have trouble getting full Overstreet Guide for most books from this period. The overall prices in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide need to be adjusted. Exceptions would be WW II covers, Timelys and classic art covers.

Recent sales: Batman #7 VG $400, #9 FN $650; Jingle Jangle #33 NM $25; Archie Annual #2 GD $30; Marvel Mystery #22 GD $195.

Original Art: Never in my 39 years of collecting have I seen original art prices as high as I did this past year. Piece after piece of silver age comic art was priced 2-3 times what would have been reasonable. It was obvious that many of the 'dealers' who put the art up for sale brought these pieces from their own collections and didn't want to sell the items. From the standpoint of an original art collector the shows I attended this year were more 'museum' shows than a viable venue to purchase vintage art. I would suggest that these bozos leave their artwork at home instead of embarrassing themselves by putting a ridiculously inflated price on the piece just so they can show off and brag about owning a particular item.

Fortunately I purchased much pre-1970 comic book and comic strip art in the '70s and '80s for my own collection —I certainly would not pay the asking price that I have seen in recent months. Now and then there is a 'buy' on eBay but mostly it is just a showcase. I also believe that the vast majority of key expensive pieces that change hands are done within a small group of perhaps 100-200 investor/speculators who simply have too much money for their own good.

Recent art sales: Capt. Caveman production cel $50; Archie daily strip from 1957 $300; Jungle Book cel from 1967 $400; Herb Trimpe Hulk page $100.

When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello. See you in 2002!

Joseph Serpico

Classic Comic Investments
www.classiccomicinvestments.com

The holidays and early winter are here in full swing, which usually means a temporary slowdown for the sales of vintage comic books. Some good bargains may be found by some eagle-eyed, cash-full collectors around this

time, especially on certain restored comics—which brings me to the nexus of my focus this time around; **restoration**.

Surely one of the hobbies most controversial and passionate subjects, and probably rightly so. Some of the well-worn arguments are: should one have a book restored for cosmetic reasons (which usually means the person having the book restored just wants to make more money from it), or for purely structural reasons? Is there a middle ground here? Then there are the arguments of how much restoration should be performed on a book—slight, moderate, or heavy? What defines the three categories? And who should judge, and does one use a different criteria for various age- and price-valued books? Should any comic ever be restored? Should all books with brown to tan pages be de-acidified? Is a pressed book even considered restored? If one places a 40 pound stack of books on top of a comic with a rolled spine, and three months later that same comic is now relatively flat, would one feel obligated to make that fact known if they were selling? If something sticky is attached to a comic book cover, and the owner removes it, and there is no visible evidence of that object ever being there, is one compelled to reveal that to a prospective buyer?

Did you know it is a common enough practice for many local and national comic book dealers, investors and even some collectors to TEAR out portions, or gouge, rip, pluck, scratch, slice or use any other method available to them to surgically remove areas of restored comics so the comic they are selling will now be unrestored, thus more money for them and a more liquid asset. It's a safe bet that many in our hobby are not aware of the extent to which this is being done. I have seen a dealer literally round off the corners of a cover of a trimmed comic, because it was so obvious it was trimmed; he then ripped and tore portions of the right side of the cover to give the book a Marvel chipping effect (the book was/is an early 1960s Marvel), put a little bit of "dirt" on the book to make the look a little more consistent, and for good measure, put a few creases in the cover in that area to round out the worn look. This was a book that was admittedly and obviously trimmed, but with no other major defects it may have graded out as a VF, restored, trimmed.

He submitted the book, and it came book unrestored, low grade, and he sold it for more then he would have if he had let it be, and if it had came back graded as a restored trimmed book!! I know dealers who routinely remove areas of comics that are color touched, so they can call the book unrestored. If you really want to laugh, or be confused, take a gander at a recent auction's descriptions of some of the restored books they had up for auction, one book was CGC slabbed and graded, with a restored purple label and described as unrestored! Why? Why else—more money!

It seems to me, when evaluating the motivations of why books are either restored, or unrestored, the primary motive in many cases is profit. Once again, the Good Book is correct, it is not money but the LOVE of money which is the root of much evil. With that in mind, I think it would be helpful to acknowledge that the hobby may need a set of rules regarding restoration.

Again there is much controversy among collectors, dealers, the AACC and others on how to accomplish this. Sure, the AACC (of which I am proud to be a member) and I respect all of us regardless of our views and perspectives, and other various cell groups of organizations and collectors across the country, sure they all want what is best for the hobby. I have no doubt about that. And I myself voted against restoration removal, with conditions, but now I have my doubts that in the world which we live it is in the best interest of the hobby to pursue that path, once again, mainly due to the self-seeking, put-me-first attitude many people have.

That's why religious laws and commandments and government restraints and laws exist, we can't be consistently counted on to do what is ethical. We all seem to agree that if a book is restored the restoration should be revealed. Something has been done to the book which has taken it from its natural state, and made it "unnatural" in some way. We agree that if one who has knowledge does not reveal this, and is prevailing in this behavior, they should be shunned by the comic community.

Why is it then, that when a book is mutilated (usually by an untrained novice—who in many cases could care less anyway) only for the sole reason to rid that book of the stigma of being restored, we simply accept it as a way of doing smart business? Whether we know it or not.

Should we not frown upon that as we currently look down upon non-disclosure? Aren't many of our hobby's best examples, and in some cases our national treasures, being unreasonably destroyed? What about the enjoyment of future generations? Don't we all have some type of inheritance to leave? I say that there should be standards publicly available, circulated, agreed upon by the best this hobby has to offer, regarding the removal of restoration, and it should be done with a realization that it would be better to have it done professionally, without doing further damage, rather then continue as it is now, behind closed doors with many books being harmed because of the stigma restoration implies.

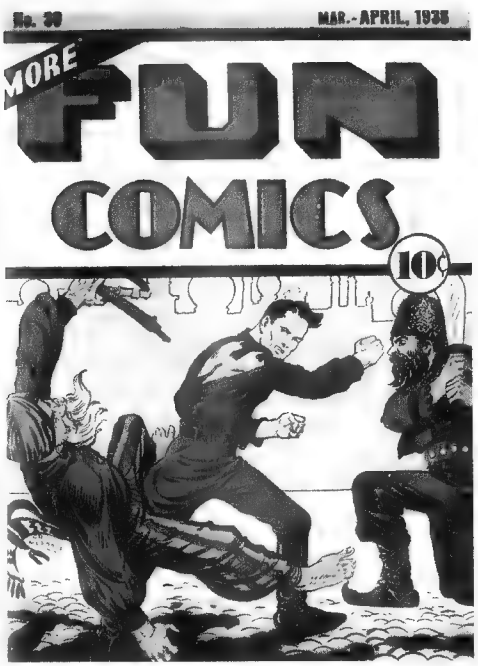
This reminds me of my studies in high school of Prohibition. The government finally realized that it wasn't working, so they repealed a law that was actually overthrown by wide public sentiment many years earlier. And who benefited from Prohibition? Those who were operating outside the rules. Would not a book professionally unrestored be worth more than book that was unprofessionally unrestored? Wouldn't an individual's conscience feel better knowing they were doing something accepted by the hobby at large? It may sound good, and look good, and feel good to say we need to know if a book has been unrestored, and if this were a perfect world maybe we would operate as such; but it's not and we have to do the best with what we have.

There are so many other aspects to restoration, I could do another five to ten paragraphs and still not get into it in depth. Suffice to say that it should be interesting and fun to see how this evolves, and it will. I look forward to it.

Sales have been reasonable as far as ability to sell product, but some areas of the market are suffering regarding price sustenance. Really not much new to report since last month, but here are some recent sales from a slowing (but still very healthy) market.

All books are CGC, unless noted: Action #352 9.4 $102, #362 9.4 $103, #408 9.2 $21, #414 9.4 $35; Adventure #388 9.2 $27; Amazing Spider-Man #302 9.8 $100; Avengers #67 9.6 $201; Brave and the Bold #72 8.5 $46; Chamber of Chills #15 9.4 $570; Daredevil #163 9.2 $29; Fantastic Four #94 9.2 $46; Flash #201 9.4 $56; Forever People #1 8.5 $23; Hawkman #25 9.2 $72; Jimmy Olsen #89 9.2 $47; Kull #1 9.2 $47; Marvel Tales #11 8.0 $29, #48 9.4 $17; Superboy #154 9.4 $97; Superman #110 8.0 $139, #274 9.6 $50; Superman Annual #6 8.5 $152.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.



COVERS © 2002 DC COMICS

YET MORE FUN! LLOYD JACQUET ESSAY FROM 1957!

[continued from page 64]

continued for many years thereafter, and can claim, I believe, one of the longest lives of any original comics.

More Fun #15 (Nov 1936)—cartoon cover by the great Vin Sullivan—comic-sized since #9

Now, we had a little bookshelf in the Major's office, in lieu of files, and on it were placed some of the new ideas which we were constantly cooking up for our new-found magazine business. These ideas were rough dummies of other comic books that we wistfully wished we could publish. Major Nicholson's pulp magazine background helped here, for it was a natural step from the "general" title of "comics" (of the "funny" type, incidentally), to the western, and the detective, aviation, and so forth, that were even then the backbone of the pulp magazine sales on the newsstands all over.

Our artists had dummied up an adventure type of comic book, and also a western title. Appropriately enough, the adventure title was called *Adventure Comics*, and I well recall the huddles we went into, wondering whether the great pulp magazine *Adventure* would let us get away with this title-idea. Major Nicholson was a steady contributor to the pulp *Adventure* magazine, and had a particular fondness for it and its publishers. He did not wish to harm them in any way, and desired to avoid any controversy with them. *Adventure Comics* did appear and is still published today. It is the oldest comics title on the stands that has been continuously published.

These events occurred during 1934, 1935 and 1936—and truly are the "beginnings" of the comic book business. Nobody knew then where it was going, nor would any one hazard a guess. But Major Nicholson's quiet determination and resourcefulness in the face of many odds and situations pushed the whole thing along until his progress started to be known by others. Then the real fun began—but that's another story!

More Fun #30 (Mar-Apr 1938), the first "adventure" cover, rendered by the remarkable Creig Flessel

[continued from page 13]

years from UK/Hong Kong and Australia. I realized what a small world it was when reading *CBM* #85 and the letter from a Terry Doyle and realizing I was the guy he was talking about buying the ECs from at the convention. I remember him coming to my place on cold wet nights on his motorbike from Runcorn. Selling my ECs was necessary then to pay bills, but also I had bought the reprints from you so still had most of them in kind. It made me realize that the world of the comic fan is about memories, nostalgia and friendship.

I believe the CGC grading/slabbing has ruined the naïveté of collecting, and now in a lot of cases has become a speculators and greedy opportunists field, which will be short-lived and the "multiples of guide" buyers will eventually get burnt out and move on—leaving the true grassroots collectors. A true collector gets pleasure from the smell of the four-color printing in the comics and, in my case, the memories of the colorful/naïve art and stories that were mostly positive (not the psychological uncertainty of Marvel etc)—*Joe Palooka*, *Little Max*, *Little Lulu*, etc—not masterpieces but memories. From my own perspective *CBM* is the only place where I can read about Golden Age and Atomic Age comics (my memories) and I prefer photos of the art/covers and also would like to see more interviews with actual collectors and talk about their memories/what they collect and also their finds (which they did not have to pay an arm and a leg for—who doesn't "dream" about the lucky find in a junk shop or somebody's attic). That is the real comic book collector—maybe also guest articles from Australian and English collectors who can share their memories/collections of the black and white reprints of early American comics. I hope I haven't crapped on too much, but would like to say what a great service you have done to comics, especially EC (I was inspired into comic collecting in the '70s when I bought the large-size *Horror Comics of the 1950s* full color reprints of EC Comics)—mind-blowing!

Alan Reeves, Melbourne, via e-mail

Restoration Rating System

Just writing to say that I am in complete agreement with Jon Berk's excellent and well thought out commentary on the issue of restoration as presented in *CBM* #85. In fact, I feel that his proposal for a restoration rating system should be taken even one step further. I believe that *all* books should be graded with a universal blue label. This would apply to *both* restored and unrestored books. The only differentiation would be a restoration rating from 0 to 10 depending upon both the type and degree of restoration. Unrestored books would be given a rating of R-0 while heavily restored books would be given a rating up to R-10. This would result in a 10-point rating system for restoration which would go hand-in-hand with the current 10-point grading system for condition. This will allow the individual collector to better determine the desirability and hence the subsequent value for restored books based upon his or her own personal preferences and tolerance levels.

The current system appears to have taken this determination of acceptability out of the hands of the collector and placed it in the hands of an independent third party (namely CGC) through their arbitrary use of color labels. This has now left us with a marketplace whereby blue label books are deemed to be acceptable. Purple label books, on the other hand, are viewed as similar to having a case of leprosy and to be avoided at all costs. As a result, books with only minor or slight restoration are now being viewed in the same purple light as books with heavy extensive restoration. This is clearly evident through the prices being realized in the marketplace for CGC restored books.

The current system has also resulted in some rather confusing and controversial situations. Referring back to Jon Berk's examples with respect to the Greg Manning auction this past June. All three key Golden Age books were clearly identified as having had some minor work done on them. Yet the Edgar Church copy of *More Fun* #52 was awarded with a universal blue label and ended up selling for multiples *above* "guide." The Denver copy of *Batman* #1 was displayed without the CGC label (most likely a purple color?) even though it had been graded by CGC and ended up selling for a substantial discount to guide. The *Captain America* #1 was branded and displayed with the stigma of a purple label and ended up selling for many multiples below guide. Any bets that the final prices realized in relationship to the guide would have been substantially different if all three books had been given either an identical blue label or an identical purple label.

The current CGC system does not have one particular color label for a near-mint book and another color label for all the non-near-mint books when it comes to condition. Similarly, we should not have a blue label for unrestored books and a purple label for restored books when it comes to restoration. We should have just *one* identical color label and let the individual collector and the marketplace determine the acceptability and desirability based upon *both* the condition and the restoration rating. With this expanded system, an R-2 rated Golden Age book may end up becoming just as acceptable as a VF/NM 9.0 Golden Age book. Needless to say, the same rating results may not be acceptable for a Modern Age book. No doubt, the lower the R-rating the more desirable the book will become, just as currently the higher the condition grade the more desirable the book becomes. The key to this expanded system is that the final determination of acceptability and desirability will be left in the hands of the individual collector and not be biased by an outside third party through their use of color labels.

If the hobby is sophisticated enough to have a condition grading system, than we should finish the job by including a formalized restoration system. A consortium of recognized dealers, restoration experts, and prominent collectors should be formed to establish the parameters for this restoration rating system. Besides leveling out the playing field between restored books and unrestored books, a restoration rating system will also provide other associated benefits:

•facilitate increased knowledge and awareness of various restoration techniques and thereby, hopefully remove some of the current fear and negative connotations associated with restoration.

•reduce the temptation for the individual collector to attempt restoration removal which could result in further damage to rare and valuable books.

•remove some of the current confusion and controversy regarding how much minor work is allowed before a book crosses over the *magic threshold* from an unrestored book to a restored book.
•provide greater liquidity in the marketplace for restored books similar to what the CGC system has done for unrestored books since their implementation.

Since the grading system now appears to be firmly in place in this hobby, we should strive to make any and all improvements to it wherever possible. If CGC does not look into the possibility of doing something similar to this, I am sure that any other competing grading system which may come into this hobby in the future will certainly take the issue of restoration into more serious consideration. Discussions with fellow collectors also seems to indicate that there is a serious concern with how restoration is viewed within the hobby and that the current CGC system has only served to magnify the problem through their arbitrary use of color labels.

As Jon Berk concluded in his commentary, it would certainly be good to have more public discussion on this controversial subject since it is long overdue and any subsequent resolutions will only result in a further advancement in our hobby.

Dean Wong, via e-mail

Cover Gallery Fan

My issue of *Comic Book Marketplace* no. 86 arrived a couple of days ago, and since you asked for feedback in your "Letter From the Editor," here goes!

First of all, here is a list of things which I enjoyed about these first three issues with you as editor: 1)The interview with John Romita, Sr.; 2) The article on Brainiac; 3) The short segment on some of Russ Manning's work; 4) The article on EC artwork auctions; 5) Pat Calhoun's article on *Thrilling Comics*. Likewise, the info on the "Birth of the Bronze Age" was pretty interesting & thought-provoking.

Now, things I didn't like in these first three issues: 1) Each one had something about Frank Frazetta. It seems you have a real admiration for him. While I think his art for EC was great, I hope we don't have to see an article about him, or related to him, in every issue of *CBM*.; 2) The Color Galleries. These used to be pretty good, but so far your selections have left a lot to be desired—at least from my standpoint.; 3) The interview with George Perez in issue 86. While I certainly think Mr. Perez is one quality artist (really enjoyed his work on New Teen Titans and Crisis on Infinite Earths), I can't see reading what may turn out to be a 30+ page interview. I'm definitely not looking forward to parts two through four!

For your information, let me present a few older issues of *CBM* that I really enjoyed and what caused me to enjoy them. Issues 45 and 64: I loved the articles on The Justice League of America, Metal Men and Doom Patrol. What's more, I thought it was great that Gary saw fit to showcase several issues of each title in the "Color Gallery," i.e., *JLA* 1-22, *Metal Men* 1-12 and *Doom Patrol* 86-124. Thanks to Diamond deciding not to issue a DC version of the *Photo Journal*, photo galleries such as these are the only means many of us collectors have of actually seeing what some early runs of these silver age DC titles looked like. I don't have the money to buy runs of titles; I only have enough to buy one early issue of each, and I want to know a little bit about that particular issue before I spend my "hard earned" money on it.

I also enjoyed issue 60, which presented a great article on *Planet Comics*, including biographies of the major characters in the title and some of the writers & artists. Likewise, issue 69's info on *All-Star Comics*, and in particular an issue-by-issue description, really made my day. Finally, the "Color Gallery" presentation on Timely House Ads, found in issue 72, was indeed superb. I find the House Ads for these golden age issues to be fascinating.

While I certainly don't mind occasional articles on Frazetta and other artists, as well as statues, newspaper comics, Big Little Books, pulps, etc., etc., if this magazine moves entirely in the direction of those things, it will not be of much interest to me.

Thanks for asking for input on *CBM*. I wish you and everyone else involved with it much success. Best wishes for the future.

Ron Ballard, Nevada

Smiles Never Depreciate

Thank you very much for issue #86!!! Glad you ran the "Jack Cole" (Plastic Man) book review. Also, happy that R.C. Harvey will be part of the *CBM* lineup. To date *CBM, Alter Ego, Comic Book Artist, CBG, Hogan's Alley* and *Cartoonist Profiles* are my favorite fanzines, magazines and newspaper.

Wish Trina Robbins' *Miss Fury* (Tarpe Mills reprints) could be in a special edition. She's seeking a publisher for this project. Glad that *CBM* back on the scene again. Thanks!

Mad Mona, Texas

Mona! Your madness! Don't take any wooden nickels!

RC

Chesler Cheerleader

Russ! I want to first congratulate you and your staff on the fine job you are doing at *CBM*. I am a big fan of the magazine and cannot wait month to month for the next issue. Great work, keep it up. I was attending a local convention held here in Raleigh NC over the weekend and got into a discussion on

MARKETPLACE MAIL

[continued from page 79]

Harry A Chesler comics. I and a group of people were discussing that there has been no mention of these great comics in any fanzine to date that we know of. With all the great books like *Punch*, *Dynamic*, *Red Seal*, *Major Victory* and a bunch of short lived one shots that were published, we the collecting community feel we need some insight or at least some kind of article on these books. These books are overlooked for some reason but have a great demand. I personally have a great deal of trouble locating some issues. I guess my main question is I wanted to know if there was any way you could have an issue on these titles or at least have Michelle Nolan do an article or something. I have found that there are a great deal of *CBM* fans with the same thought as I and wanted to share my thoughts with you personally. Again, best regards and hope you and yours have a very nice holiday season. Please let me know your thoughts (please).

Jim Kerney, via e-mail

Jim, I agree, and I have already set the wheels in motion by contacting Jon Berk, who has agreed to write such an article for CBM, with illustrations from his collection, including some rare original art from the Harry A Chesler shop. Look for it soon.

RC

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

[continued from page 4]

think it was dumber than a bag of sticks. Embarrassingly stupid and I'm glad I didn't write it."

The whole issue boils down to this: We shouldn't have to choose between cartoon-y comics and "representational" comics. There is plenty of room for both. But most of the new talent seems to direct their efforts at the representational comics (like ECs, and like the vast majority of the output of today's DC and Marvel, Dark Horse, etc.) Where are today's equivalents of the visual poetry of George Herriman, E.C. Segar, Cliff Sterrett, and Frank King? Where are the Al Capps, the Chester Goulds, the George Carlsons? Maybe if magazines like this were to pay more attention to these artists, and less attention to the superhero genre, today's new talents would get the message.

Russ

ODDBALL COMICS!

[continued from page 65]

SCI-FI FAN: *We needed "ray guns" to go with our outfits, and since the mosquitoes are bad out here, we killed two birds with one stone and carried spray guns filled with insecticide! Then we ran into that bunch of BEMS...and Hank told us they were ARTOPODS, which is just another term for INSECTS, so..."*

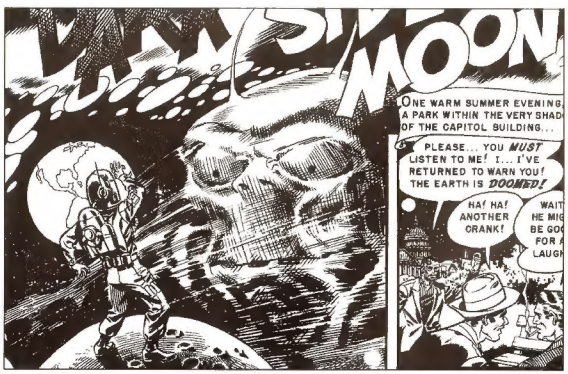
Actually, that's "arthropods," fanboy! So just how did this story get written in the first place, anyway? "Fens"? "BEMS"? "Fanference"? Was the writer a science fiction fan himself—or did someone lose a bet? Or what?!?

This issue of *Space Western Comics* also features the stories "Spurs Jackson And His Space Vigilantes Face The Menace Of The Meteor Men," "Spurs Jackson And His Space Vigilantes Battle The Red Menace Beyond The Moon!," "Trip To Mercury," "Space Prospectors!" and an unintentionally hilarious one-pager, "Visit Spurs Jackson At His Spaceranch In Spaceman's Gulch!" Also included (doubtlessly to qualify for a cheaper mail-rate) is a two-page text story, "Spurs Jackson And The Vanishing Water."

Charlton Comics surely had the weirdest, wackiest issue-numbering of any funnybook publisher. Although it's listed as "Vol. 1, No. 43" this is actually the third issue of *Space Western Comics*! According to *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, the comic started out with the title of *Cowboy Western Comics*, became *Space Western Comics* with issue 41, then reverted to the title *Cowboy Western Comics* with issue 46! In other words, there were only five issues of *Space Western Comics* ever published!

You'll have to excuse me, folks; Charlton's supposed "logic" in this matter is making me feel a bit "spaced out" right now!

ODDBALL Factoid – It's fairly apparent that artist Stan Campbell was drawing more than inspiration from one of EC's science-fiction tales delineated by sci-fi maestro Wallace Wood when he sketched this rather derivative cover for Space Western Comics!


MOON
ONE WARM SUMMER EVENING, A PARK WITHIN THE VERY SHADOW OF THE CAPITOL BUILDING...
PLEASE... YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME! I... I'VE RETURNED TO WARN YOU! THE EARTH IS DOOMED!
HA! HA! ANOTHER CRANK!
WAIT! HE MIGHT BE GOOD FOR A LAUGH!

ART © 2002 WM. M. GAINES AGENT, INC.

(right) Detail from Wally Wood splash, "Dark Side of the Moon," **Weird Fantasy** #15 (Sep/Oct 1950)

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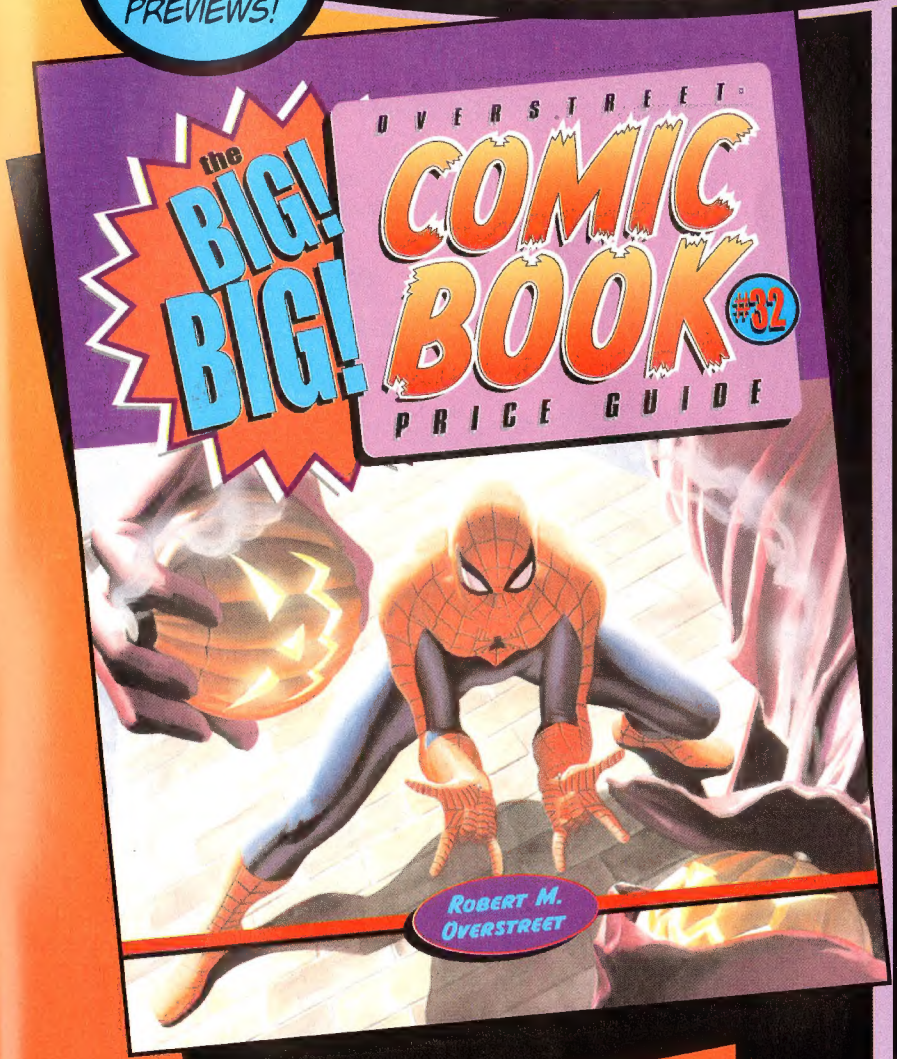

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